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UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

THE BRITISH COUNCIL OF CHURCHES AND JUST WAR: 1945-59

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF SOCIAL STUDIES
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

BY

JONATHAN LINDEN GORRY

COVENTRY

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ABSTRACT

Using previously unresearched archives from the British Council of Churches (BCC), a constituent assembly of the World Council of Churches and the established vehicle for communicating official non-Catholic approaches to the nuclear dilemma, this thesis raises two questions: (1) How did Christians in the BCC evaluate the role of the British State and their responsibility as citizens in the Cold War years 1945-59? (2) How did such evaluations affect a Christian policy-making process that aimed to influence Western defence attitudes?

Answers are provided by analysing the BCC's role in developing and promoting the limited war nuclear strategy, a *just war* alternative to the Macmillan Government's formula of massive retaliation. The study contends that the British Churches' stance *vis-à-vis* the ethics of nuclear deterrence was largely influenced by judgements on the legitimacy of the State and its compatibility with Christian values. These judgements determined the nature of advice offered to Government and favoured the articulation of an 'Augustinian' form of political realism.

The thesis makes two substantive claims. On one hand it suggests that the significance of the BCC approach lay, not in its challenge to Government policy, but in its role as a counter to the radical idealism represented by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. On the other hand it argues that the *just war* should be conceptually located within the realist rather than idealist theoretical frameworks. The study concludes that discussions of *just war* cannot be separated from qualitative judgements about the character of the State. Christian attitudes to war are grounded in particular assumptions about legitimate social authority, the right of the State to determine policy, personal and collective political responsibility.

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I would like to thank the following people for their help in the production of this thesis. Without them this study would not have been possible.

Throughout my period of research Dr. Peter Burnham has been unfailing with his patience, support, and constructive criticism. My former colleagues at Coventry Cathedral, particularly Paul Oestreicher, offered advice and the loan of books. Rev. Dr. Colin Davey gave me the permission to work on the BCC archives, whilst the staff at the Church of England Records Centre, especially BCC archivist Sarah Duffield, provided their time and the primary material for consultation. Don MacIver extended helpful comments, and my parents the environment conducive to study.

Above all I am grateful to Catherine for her encouragement and for reminding me that there is always light at the end of the research tunnel.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

This study has had a long gestation. It began while I was at Coventry Cathedral, one of a wide variety of jobs I had in the five years between leaving school and going to university. Here I became fascinated with the different approaches Christians had to political problems. On one hand there were those who saw the absolute sovereign State, in its liberal democratic form, as representative of all sections of society and were able to endorse the *status quo*. Ranked against them, there were those who saw the State standing 'over against' society, not so much a permanent necessity, but as the embodiment of certain assumptions that should be called into question. All this was accepted with support from the Bible. Attitudes were entrenched and woven into the fabric of people's spirituality.

The tensions between these competing traditions are brought into sharp focus when the problem of war is considered. The dominant Christian approach, the *just war*, possesses the critical and self-questioning tone that enables it to judge on inter-State conflict, yet its prerequisite for war to be conducted by the 'State-as-legitimate-authority' makes it unable to qualify cases of intra-State violence, civil war, and revolution. The ability to judge on these latter is vital for any articulate theory on the morality of war in a divided world. This led me to question the extent to which *just war* amounted to just-war -- a culturally specific set of presumptions.

This project, therefore, has developed as a result of a variety of experiences which explain how it came to be written and take the form it has. Its origin is rooted in personal experience: the theological conversations I had with various priests whilst working at Coventry Cathedral. But I have also been motivated by the undertaking of retrospective analysis from the perspectives of politics and international studies. These disciplines have formed the analysis of detailed and extensive archival material which form the bulk of the data on which this thesis is based. For these reasons it is a Christian position on the State, legitimate authority, and political responsibility that is of interest rather than other aspects of the *just war*.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A-bomb	Atomic Bomb
BCC	British Council of Churches
CBMS	Conference of British Missionary Societies
CA	Christian Action
CCIA	Commission of the Churches on International Affairs
CND	Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
COPEC	Conference on Politics, Economics and Citizenship
DIA	Department of International Affairs (BCC International Department)
For	Fellowship of Reconciliation
H-bomb	Hydrogen Bomb
IMC	International Missionary Council
IR	International Relations (the academic discipline)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NCANWT	National Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons Tests
n.d.	no date (on letter/document)
NPC	National Peace Council
PPU	Peace Pledge Union
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander in Europe
SCM	Student Christian Movement
UN	United Nations
WCC	World Council of Churches

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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

Duncan Sandys' Defence White Paper of 1957 has been described as the purest expression of the doctrine of massive retaliation ever put into practice.¹ This declaration reflected an increased willingness by the Macmillan Government to resort to total nuclear warfare. The British Council of Churches (BCC)² responded to this controversial policy by developing and promoting an alternative 'theology of deterrence' known as limited war.³ This just war strategy called for renewed efforts to achieve incremental multilateral⁴ nuclear disarmament whilst condoning the

¹ Groom 1974, p.581.

² Since 1990 the BCC has been known as 'The Council of Churches in Britain and Ireland' or CCBI -- the name change coinciding with the incorporation of the Catholic Church in Britain and Ireland.

³ This philosophy, currently known as flexible response, still guides Western nuclear policy. See Garnett 1977; and Buzan 1989 for information on recent applications of the theory. Also see the collection of essays in Booth (ed.) 1991 which serves as a useful introduction to thinking about the nature of international security, deterrence, and nuclear strategy from both realist and idealist perspectives.

⁴ The distinction between uni and multi-lateralism is more heuristically useful than terminologically precise. Indeed the limited war approach involved a combination of both initiatives. Following John Elford, it is accepted that the standard conceptual polarisation between those opposed to nuclear weapons in principle (unilateralists) and those who are not (multilateralists) is inadequate and can be misleading (see Elford's introduction in Bauckham and Elford [eds.] 1989, p.1). It is necessary however, to argue that the defining feature of the BCC line on disarmament was its essential incremental, gradualist, or conservative attempt to manage change. The key distinction is hence not so much between unilateralism and multilateralism *per se* but one crucially between conditional (incremental) and unconditional approaches to the nuclear dilemma.

potential use of nuclear weapons on a restricted scale. The theory was seen by the BCC as the appropriate moral response to an unethical defence policy. Yet the Churches sponsored limited war despite the ethico-political appeal of organisations such as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) who called for the immediate unilateral and non-contingent renunciation of British nuclear weapons. . It is not the purpose of this study however, to expose the limitations of Government action⁵ or assess the CND's sociological development.⁶ Rather, the objective is to lay bare the discussions and policy options that led the British Council of Churches to endorse the idea that a war fought with nuclear weapons could be 'just'.

⁵ Representative examples of this include the work of Noel-Baker 1958; Pierre 1972; Groom 1974; Freeman 1986; Dockrill 1988; Clark and Wheeler 1989; Navias 1991; and Melissen 1993.

⁶ There is a huge literature concerning the history, development and motivations of the peace organisations particularly CND. Driver 1964 is probably the most famous and most quoted introduction. Parkin 1968 offers the accepted social analysis of the Campaign, an approach up-dated by Mattausch's 1986 PhD. Taylor and Pritchard 1980; Taylor 1988 and Taylor's 1983 PhD locate the peace movement within its historical context and are very knowledgeable about the development of CND and its various ideologies. Duff 1971; and Collins 1966 are autobiographies by the Campaign's first General Secretary, and Chair respectively. Minnion and Bolsover 1983 offer a similar history in the words of the people involved. Myers' 1965 PhD is an useful American study comparing CND with its associated Committee of 100. Hinton 1989; Taylor and Young 1987 deal with CND in the context of the wider British peace movements. Most of these accounts are written by activists obviously sympathetic to CND aims. Brandon 1987 offers a highly critical study of British peace movements including CND.

The following chapters unravel this aspect of Church⁷-State⁸ relations by providing answers to two questions: (1) How did Christians in the BCC evaluate the role of the British State and their responsibility as citizens in the Cold War years 1945-59? (2) How did such evaluations affect a Christian policy-making process that aimed to influence Western defence attitudes?

This focus is justified on three counts. First, the study utilises the extensive archives and official publications of the British Council of Churches. The British Council of Churches was the UK based associated assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) constituted to speak as an authoritative Protestant voice in political and social affairs. No other study has utilised these primary sources (located in the Church of England Record Centre, Bermondsey) and most of the archive was unsorted and uncatalogued. The work is an original contribution to substantive empirical research in an area largely ignored by the literature on politics and international studies. Secondly, it is a unique examination of the policy-making process within the British Council of Churches with special

⁷ When this thesis uses the title 'Church' it refers to the collective Christian Church and not one particular denomination (i.e. Church of England) unless so specified.

⁸ The term 'State' throughout this thesis is used to describe not only elected Government (Cabinet and Prime Minister) but also the permanent institutions of the Civil Service, and coercive apparatuses such as the police, armed forces, and judiciary. For an introduction to debates on the term 'the State' see Jessop 1990; Burnham 1994. For more detail and guidelines for further reading see the collection of essays in Clarke (ed.) 1991.

reference to defence and disarmament. The BCC is an appropriate study because it was also the principal vehicle for developing and communicating official non-Catholic approaches to the nuclear dilemma. Finally, the thesis makes positive contributions to the ever-expanding literature on the *just war* with particular reference to its relationship to organisational practice, and conceptual location within International Relations (IR) theory.

It is surprising to find that the diverse accounts of *just war* are not accompanied by contrasting analysis that helps establish why the State should be accepted as the primary social organisation worth defending and killing for. Traditional accounts are more interested in the practical application of the theory (the conflicts it is used to justify) and specific theoretical limitations (which conflicts it could actually justify).⁹ Most existing literature thus conceptualises the State in realist fashion (*viz.* the repository of national interest and primary focus for legitimate political allegiance), whilst accepting *just*

⁹ Examples include: Walzer 1977; Holmes 1989; Teichman 1985 and 1986; Johnson 1981 and 1984; Ramsey 1961 and 1968; Paskins and Dockrill 1979. Jean Bethke Elshtain is particularly representative when she concludes that *just war* should be accepted as an approach whose "specific strength embedded in its ontology of peace is the vantage point it affords with reference to social arrangements" (1985, p.44). A recent text in moral philosophy (Norman 1995) does, nevertheless, point away from such orthodoxy by arguing that, if the *just war* is to be useful in deciding whether a community has the right to defend its cultural and political life, it has to show what it is about that community that is worth preserving. Stephen Toulmin's essay "The Limits of Allegiance in a Nuclear Age" (in Elshtain [ed.] 1992, pp.280-98) also calls on people to re-think the assumption that the State should be the primary focus for legitimate allegiance.

war and realism as opposing categories (because thinking about justice in war is 'idealistic').¹⁰ These assumptions appear based on a Weberian ethic of 'responsibility', where realism earns its label by emphasising political consequences over moral principles, and one of 'ultimate ends' where idealism emphasises moral imperatives over expediency.¹¹ By focusing attention on a tradition that aims to prevent war and govern its conduct, many see *just war* as an alternative to *Realpolitik*.

¹⁰ Tucker 1960; Osgood and Tucker 1967. Elshtain sees *just war* as realism's most important contender (1985, p.39); whilst Adeney's 1982 PhD compares *just war* and realism as the main contrasting and widely used conceptual systems for explaining and evaluating international conflict.

¹¹ See Weber's "Politics as a Vocation" in Gerth and Mills 1991, pp.77-128; analysis by Smith 1986; Rosenthal 1991; Warner 1991. For Weber "we must be clear that all ethically orientated conduct may be guided by one of two fundamentally differing and irreconcilably opposed maxims: conduct can be orientated to an 'ethic of ultimate ends' or to an 'ethic of responsibility.' This is not to say that an ethic of ultimate ends is identical with irresponsibility, or that an ethic of responsibility is identical with unprincipled opportunism" (p.120). It is striking that Weber's discussion is suffused with theological content with the Sermon on the Mount constituting his 'personal' ethic of ultimate ends. The terms of the debate are familiar. Realists see idealism as an 'utopian' or normative political theory that attempts to moralise IR. The decisive point is that whereas idealist ethics are not supposed to ask about consequences, for realism "expediency becomes a moral duty" (Morgenthau 1946, p.186) based upon an awareness that what is done in the political sphere concerns others who would suffer from imprudent (i.e. idealistic) action. Morgenthau (1951, p.33) saw the distinction as not really "between moral principles and national interest devoid of moral integrity, but between one set of moral principles divorced from political reality and another set of principles derived from political reality". Rosenthal (1991, p.47) concurs that "the realists' main concern about morality...was that 'good intentions' not become the sole factor or even an especially prominent factor in the making of policy decisions." Elshtain (1985, p.40) concludes that "realism's bracing promise is [hence] to spring politics free from the constraints of moral judgement and limitation, thereby assuring its autonomy as historic force and discursive subject-matter, and to offer a picture of the world of people and states as they really are rather than as we might yearn them to be". For additional commentary see Kegley (ed.) 1995 (especially his introduction pp.1-24; and Joel Rosenthal's "Rethinking the Moral Dimensions of Foreign Policy" pp.317-34); Brown 1992; and the selection of essays in Nardin and Mapel (eds.) 1993 particularly Jack Donnelly on "Twentieth-Century Realism" pp.85-111.

Such assertions are not borne out by the research for this thesis. By adopting a perspective which first examines the origin of just war attitudes to the State, legitimate authority, and political responsibility; and secondly illustrating the debates surrounding the development, articulation, and eventual dissemination of the BCC's limited war, an alternative interpretation has emerged. The thesis shows that in the 1950s the British Churches combined a Christian idealism with a realist pragmatism in an approach that was distinctly 'Augustinian'¹² in its ancestry. This focus is an analysis of the Augustinian position on the State, its support for the exigencies of statecraft, as opposed to an evaluation of other aspects of just war (i.e. the traditional emphasis on issues of intentionality, discrimination, and proportionality).

This study suggests two hypotheses: the first of these is that, from the perspective of International Relations, the BCC's approach can best be understood as a form of 'Augustinian' realism. This is to argue that the Churches' maintained a confrontational view of international relations

¹² Several recent attempts have been made to revive Saint Augustine, the fourth century instigator of just war, in order to claim a post-positivist methodology for IR. These include: Roger Epp's 1990 PhD (see also his 1991 research paper) where Epp values the approach for its "more fixed moral references beyond consequences alone, mere order, or national interest" (1990 PhD p.212); Ian Thompson's essay "Liberal Values and Power Politics" (in Davis [ed.] 1986 pp.82-102) who utilises Augustine in his drive to find a "positive political ethic" for the nuclear age; and post-modernists who enlist Augustine in their construction of post-structuralist paradigm (Der Derian 1987; Connolly 1993).

by subscribing to a particular conception of the State, national interest, and Christian political responsibility. The second hypothesis is that, following a consideration of the first proposition, the BCC's *just war* should be conceptually located within the realist rather than idealist theoretical frameworks. This analysis brings forward two possible conclusions. On one hand, the idea that the significance of the BCC approach lay, not in its challenge to Government policy, but in its role as a counter to the radical idealism represented by the CND position. On the other hand, the notion that discussions of *just war* cannot be separated from qualitative judgements about the character of the State. Christian attitudes to war are grounded in theological and ethical assumptions about legitimate social authority, the right of the State to determine policy, individual and collective political responsibility.

Quite apart from the suggested divergence between unilateralist and multilateralist positions, the complexities of Christian Cold War attitudes took various forms. Tensions between pacifism¹³ and pacific-ism, between personal ethics

¹³ In this thesis it is necessary to define 'pacifist' (without the qualification 'nuclear') as the position held by individuals and groups who reject the use of direct force and violence. The category includes non-coercive resistance that relies only on persuasion, as well as resistance that uses indirect coercion (e.g. strikes, boycotts, etc.). James Hinton's excellent study *Protests and Visions* offers a useful commentary: he argues that the word 'pacifist' did not acquire its modern, restricted meaning until the 1930s. When the word was first adopted at the beginning of this century, a pacifist was someone who rejected the idea that the best way to preserve peace was to prepare for war. Pacifists, whilst working for peace and the prevention of war, looked for the removal of force from international relations. This did not mean that a pacifist

and public policy, between the Church as it is and the Church as it could be, have been part of Christianity since its earliest days. Between different approaches there is passionate debate but no agreed answers. Such tensions, however, were mostly avoided by the early Church, institutionalised with the fourth century adoption of Christianity by the State, before being exacerbated by the development of weapons of mass destruction in the twentieth century. A major theme of this study is to consider the nature of these disagreements and trace their origins.

rejected the use of force in all circumstances. For instance, those who were opposed to the Great War described themselves as pacifists even though many were not opposed to war in some circumstances: those who did used terms like 'non-resistance', 'absolute pacifism', 'extreme pacifism', or 'Christian pacifism'. The modern identification of 'pacifism' with what would previously have been called 'absolute pacifism' is a direct result of the division of the peace movement in the 1930s over the appropriate response to fascism. This etymological schism is particularly problematic for it leaves no single word to describe many of the ideas and people under discussion. In 1956 A.J.P. Taylor overcame this problem by distinguishing 'pacifists' (the absolutists) from 'pacific-ists' (the rest). See Hinton 1989, pp.x-xi. Complementary typologies offered by Ceadel 1987 (Chapter 7); and Teichman 1986 (Chapter 1). In this thesis pacifist and pacific-ist follows this modern usage whilst utilising the generic terms 'peace activist' and 'peace movement'. 'Peace activist' includes all Christian idealists who challenged from within the 'peace movement' the culture of war. The term includes pacifists, pacific-ists, anarchists, international socialists, as well as traditional liberals. Whilst most pacifists were peace activists, not all peace activists were pacifist. It is argued that before the nuclear age many peace activists would have in fact associated themselves with the just war tradition particularly viz. the battle against fascism.

Plan of the Thesis

This research falls into three sections: Section One (Chapter Two) considers the study's theoretical context. Section Two (Chapters Three-Five) examines historical precedents, the context and development of ecumenical attitudes to war and nuclear weapons from 1945-57. Section Three (Chapters Six-Eight) details the Churches' specific response to Western nuclear strategy in the years 1957-59.

Section One, Chapter Two provides a framework of theory for the rest of this thesis. Its specific intention is to locate, in terms of IR, the Augustinian position on the State, legitimate authority, and political responsibility as neglected aspects within the *just war* tradition. By highlighting the realist assumptions of Augustine's *just war* the tradition is presented in terms suitable for the purposes of this study. Its significance lies, subsequently, in the way it institutionalised a particular theoretical approach to questions of authority, legitimacy, and political responsibility within Christian thinking.

Section Two, Chapter Three locates the empirical focus of this thesis by introducing the British Council of Churches as an organisation. It examines the driving forces and policy implications of international ecumenicalism in the years 1910-48. These efforts resulted in the creation of

the World Council of Churches and its constituent assembly, the BCC, during World War II.

Chapter Four locates, against the background of Chapter Three, the development of late twentieth century British Church debate towards war. It is particularly concerned with the increase in tensions between different traditions generated by the West's use and manufacture of the atomic bomb 1945-48. The chapter examines the BCC's first exploration of *just war* logic: *The Era of Atomic Power* (also known as the Oldham Report).

Chapter Five shows that, although the development and deployment of thermonuclear weapons in the years 1950-57 raised new ethical questions for Christians, the attitudes of the British Council of Churches and its member Churches were as divided as their attitudes to the atom bomb. The chapter illustrates the nature of this growing tension between Christian peace activists and *just war* advocates. It considers the development of Christian responses towards thermonuclear weapons, whilst outlining the controversy regarding the testing of hydrogen weapons.

Section Three, Chapter Six establishes the central concern of this thesis by introducing massive retaliation and limited war as strategic concepts. It develops the

proposition that the controversy surrounding the Churches' failure to come out strongly against the H-bomb, rather than nuclear weapons as such, brought the BCC to a detailed consideration of nuclear strategy. The chapter assesses the reasons why Admiral Buzzard, a strategic expert, was invited into BCC circles. This leads to a discussion and comment on Buzzard's address delivered to Council in October 1957.

Chapter Seven reveals that the most important consequence of Buzzard's address was the creation of a working-group to examine the moral aspects of defence and disarmament: 'The Study Group on the Moral Aspects of Disarmament.' By examining Study Group method and processes the chapter illustrates the development of Buzzard's limited war realism within the BCC.

Chapter Eight analyses the impact of CND on the peace debate within the British Churches by locating its attitude to the State, and understanding of political responsibility. It argues that, as a consequence of the CND, the debate in the Churches moved beyond tensions between pacifist and *just war* into a debate primarily between gradualist multilateralism (*just war*) and non-contingent unilateralism (nuclear pacifism). It develops this with a detailed study of the final product of the Study Group's labour: *Christians and Atomic War*.

The study concludes in Chapter Nine by drawing these elements together into some final analysis. It refers once more to the twin hypotheses introduced above and theoretically located in Chapter Two (i.e. the BCC's response was an 'Augustinian' form of realism, and the *just war* is realist). The chapter asserts the idea that discussions of *just war* cannot be separated from qualitative judgements about the character of the State. Christian attitudes to war are grounded in particular assumptions about legitimate authority, the right of the State to determine policy, personal and collective political responsibility.

An appendix examines the informal problems of conducting research into Christian attitudes to war based on archival material.

SECTION I:
THEORETICAL CONTEXT

CHAPTER TWO:

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter does not attempt an extensive review of *just war*.¹ The focus of study is rather more specific and orientated to locating, for students of International Relations (IR), the Augustinian position on the State, legitimate authority, and political responsibility as neglected aspects within the *just war* tradition.

Part One of this section claims that an objective Christian attitude to what should constitute a 'legitimate' political authority does not exist and that students are forced to interpret competing Christian traditions. It emphasises that in Christianity's first three centuries a form of idealist pacific-ism dominated the early Church. This utopian inheritance pointed towards a Christian role in questioning the legitimacy of, as Clifford Allen notes, the "claim of the State to dispose of a man's life against his will."²

Part Two contends that this idealism was marginalised, following the fourth century adoption of Christianity as the

¹ An introduction can be found in an examination of Walzer 1977; Holmes 1989; Teichman and 1985 and 1986; Johnson 1981 and 1984; Ramsey 1961 and 1968; Paskins and Dockrill 1979.

² Allen cited by Kaldor in Taylor and Young (eds.) 1987, p.3.

religion of State, largely due to Saint Augustine's pragmatic response to the exigencies of statecraft. By highlighting the realist presuppositions of Augustine's just war the tradition is presented in terms suitable for the purposes of this study. Its significance lies in the way it institutionalised a particular approach to questions of authority, legitimacy, individual and collective political responsibility within Christian thinking.

Part I: Interpretation and the Early Church

Jenny Teichman has pointed out "the idea that war must be renounced comes to us from Christianity."³ Although there is no explicit New Testament discussion of the morality of war most commentators accept that Christ's teaching condemned killing, violence and warfare.⁴ Yet it cannot be assumed that there is one objective Christian attitude to be discerned. A consensus on the most 'legitimate' of Christian responses does not exist. Thinkers, both secular and Christian, remain divided not only over the detail of Christ's teaching but also over whether his comments on political resistance should be separated from the locus of his general message. The study of this thesis has revealed Christian attitudes to be as much a contest over interpreting the

³ Teichman 1986, p.10.

⁴ e.g. Harries 1986a, pp.13-25; Sider and Taylor 1982, pp.109-54; Kertesz 1989, pp.1-16; Teichman 1986, pp.10-15. Potter's biographical essay (1969, pp.87-121) surveys the literature up to 1970 and suggests further reading.

politics of meaning within the Bible, as it is a conflict over assessing particular ethical responses to authority, political responsibility, and war. This is important because Christians look to the Bible as a way of giving meaning to their temporal existence and understanding the nature of their social obligations.

It is only natural to find different responses to Christ as a moral teacher. Ernst Bloch has warned that attempts to understand Christ's message should always begin with 'detective work' because the Bible is nothing other than a contested, multi-layered, contradiction-riddled text, reflecting conflicting principles and interests.⁵ For him the teasing out of evidence begins with the recognition that religious traditions are handed down, interpreted and reinterpreted, in light of changing conceptions about God and society. The Bible contains symbols, or allegories, of different political and spiritual truths. Tendencies of accommodation lie alongside tendencies of resistance. On one hand the Gospel material can be related to themes of prophecy and political protest; whilst on the other hand, it is a potent tool in the service of the *status quo*.⁶

To start here is to draw the conclusion that ideological preference is inherent in the choice and treatment of secondary accounts. It involves interpreting 'meaning'

⁵ Bloch 1972, particularly pp.21-38.

⁶ This is a central theme of 'liberation theology'. See Cadorette, Giblin, Legge, and Synder (eds.) 1996 for a recent reader from the leading exponents.

rather than 'truth' and concerning ourselves with what is being said in political terms, rather than in theological terms. Yet the two sorts of debate are not (and cannot be) kept apart. Theology, like any intellectual pursuit, is shaped by society even if it is also shaped by non-social sources (i.e. prayer, inspiration).⁷ Theological themes affect political interpretation; vice versa, political interpretation affects theology. To follow Moltmann: "while there may be a naive and politically unaware theology, there can be no apolitical theology."⁸

The history of Christianity has been a story of the ways in which its symbols have been used by different groups and classes. The Bible has sustained and constituted various social relationships. McLellan points out: "theology has been both a dependent and an independent variable: theology, and religious belief in general, socially constructed realities -- but that means that they are both socially constructed and social realities."⁹ If the scriptures are accepted as suggestive documents offering both a critique of State institutions and projects, whilst also enabling the legitimisation of State activities, it helps in the understanding of why thinkers disagree over whether Christ's message about violence was one for personal consumption, or

⁷ The assumption that the Churches' structures and ideas are likewise determined by the particular societies within which they are placed forms the basis of Robin Gill's interesting study "Prophecy in a Socially Determined Church" (Gill 1979).

⁸ Moltmann cited by Nicholls in Nicholls and Williams 1984, p.28.

⁹ McLellan 1992, p.116.

one which demanded a collective response. This means, however, that both text and interpreter are constrained and conditioned by social context. It means that the Church as an institution cannot distance itself from the State as the form of social organisation to which its members belong, nor the ethical dilemmas citizenship brings.

James Childress has set the parameters for a constructive appraisal of the material by stating "that modes of resistance, non-violent and violent, have been controversial for Christians who have drawn different lines and set different limits in *individual* and *social* responses to evil and injustice."¹⁰ Determining the 'most appropriate' Christian ethical response is a subject of considerable disagreement and controversy. It is here we are faced with the question: is the Christian vocation to be achieved (i.e. God's will fulfilled) by efforts to instigate justice through the transformation of the State, or is it to be experienced inwardly through the transformation of the self? The scriptures are extraordinary ambivalent with regard to either individual or collective responsibility.¹¹ Following this

¹⁰ Italics mine. See Childress's essay "Niebuhr's Realistic-Pragmatic Approach to War and the Nuclear Dilemma" in Harries (ed.) 1986b, p.127. This 'level of analysis' problem (i.e. private as opposed to collective responsibility) is vital and one that bears a striking resemblance to the liberal-communitarian divide within political science. Liberals (e.g. Rawls, Nozick, Dworkin) tend to assume or argue that the individual has an identity and value prior to and independent of society whilst communitarians (e.g. MacIntyre, Walzer, Sandel) argue that individuals are constituted by the communities in which they live and that the values which influence the individual's behaviour, together with the meanings by which they make sense of their life, derive from their community. For an introduction see Morrice 1995; Brown 1992.

¹¹ On this see Rowland 1988, p.156ff.

dichotomy between communitarian and cosmopolitan interpretation it is easy to pluck texts at random and out of context to prove or justify one position over another.

Take as an example Christ's teachings on the Sermon on the Mount:

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.¹²

On the one hand, idealists typically point to such sentiments to support a position of 'non-violent resistance', ranked against them, realists argue that the relationship between Christ's injunction and its operationalisation within modern politics is rather more complex. The realism of Reinhold Niebuhr is particularly important to consider if the attitudes of many of those involved in the BCC debates of the late 1940s and 1950s are to be located.

Niebuhr's Realism and Christian Idealism

For Niebuhr 'realism' "denotes the disposition to take all factors in a social and political situation which offer resistance to established norms into account, particularly the

¹² Matt. 5:38-41. Similar sentiments can be found among the beatitudes: "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth....Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." (Matt. 5:5,9). Also see Matt. 5:21-2; Luke 14:31-3; John 14:27. Throughout this thesis all classical texts will be referenced, not by page number, but in the standard form of Chapter; Book and Chapter; or Book, Chapter, and Verse as appropriate. Individual expositions, articles, or commentaries are placed in inverted commas and volume titles italicised.

factors of self-interest and power."¹³ This implies that Christian idealists are 'subject to illusions about social realities': "'Idealism' is, in the esteem of its proponents, characterised by loyalty to moral norms and ideals, rather than to self-interest, whether individual or collective. It is, in the opinion of its critics, characterised by a disposition to ignore or be indifferent to the forces in human life which offer resistance to universally valid ideals and norms."¹⁴ Idealists, however, are more willing to make an ultimate commitment in terms of political choice because their intrinsic optimism leads them to assume that rational reasoning can master human destiny. Yet the idea that Christ's ethics could be a "historical possibility" was rejected by Niebuhr because he believed politics involved compromise and pragmatism, rather than ideological purity, and that the Christian should enter politics only in order to check evil rather than in pursuit of Christ's ethical injunctions.

To Niebuhr these contrasting traditions, at all times, "emphasise disposition, rather than doctrines; and they are bound to be inexact. It must remain a matter of opinion whether or not a man takes adequate account of all the various factors and forces in a social situation."¹⁵ This is the crux of the matter. In the tensions between different approaches

¹³ "Augustine's Political Realism" in Niebuhr 1953, p.114.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., p.115.

there is passionate debate, creativity, but no agreed answers. Differences in interpretation allow multifarious Biblical readings to suggest violent support for the State as one legitimate Christian response, peaceful direct non-violence one other approach, with categorical non-resistance yet another possibility.

On one side the recognition that the world is flawed and imperfect leads some Christians to take a realist view. This idea is based on the notion that failures of intelligence and imagination with regard to moral behaviour are to be ascribed to 'natural limitations'. Michael Howard, the international theorist and contributor to the BCC's 1959 Report *Christians and Atomic War*, has succinctly summed up this approach: "The best a 'moral' statesman involved in such a dilemma (i.e. a struggle between ethics and politics) can do is to realise that it is a dilemma; that he is an actor in the familiar tragedy brought about by a conflict of values; and that nothing can be gained by renouncing his role, that role is a tragic one."¹⁶

On the other side, however, the recognition that the essential equality of all humanity before God brings forward a desire to transform the form and conduct of the State.

¹⁶ Howard 1970, p.247. Similar sentiments are voiced by Richard Harries (in Bridger [ed.] 1983, p.76) when he wrote: "That we have only a limited capacity to take into account the interests of others is not the sign of some dramatic fall from grace but an indication of our immaturity....We are infants struggling through to immaturity rather than perfect beings thrown out of paradise." Compare with Deane 1963, p.167.

Rather than striving for a this-world free from imperfection, proponents of such idealism challenge the notion that the conflation of politics and ethics confuses the 'real issues' or that the State, politics, or international affairs constitutes an immutable realm of the 'given'. It is this view that brought forward the 'peace movement'.

The above observation does not render the search for a Christian approach superfluous, but adds the dimension that context and ideological perspective should be considered paramount in any analysis of competing traditions.

The Early Church

It should come as little surprise that scholars are undecided on the attitudes of the early Church towards the State, war, and political responsibility. Some argue¹⁷ that the early Church was united in its opposition to the State because the evidence points to a pacifist idealism, whilst others claim¹⁸ that Christians were supportive of the State because they served in the Roman army long before the fourth century adoption of Christianity as the religion of Empire and that purity of commitment was far from universal. Simplistic claims are to be avoided.¹⁹

¹⁷ The most important being Cadoux 1919; Bainton 1960; and Lassere 1962. To be fair to Bainton, as Price points out (in Bauckham and Elford [eds.] 1989, p.81), he did modify his claim and was forced to concede different levels of commitment among early Christians. Also see Elshtain 1985; Ferguson 1973; and Gill 1979 for similar interpretations.

¹⁸ e.g. Helgeland 1974; Harnack 1981; Kertesz 1989.

¹⁹ Both Frances Young 1989 and Geoffrey Price in Bauckham and Elford (eds.) 1989 advise this.

The attitude of the early Church has been the subject of extensive controversy. On these terms it would be entirely naive to suppose that diversity of view was a modern phenomenon and the practice of subsequent generations represent a failure to live by the ideals of Christ. It is necessary to note that the early Church, rather than being pacifist in the modern sense, contained a wide spectrum of views and opinions about legitimate authority, political responsibility, and war. Attitudes were not homogeneous and diversity was as much the order of their day as it is in ours. Michael Howard points out: "the teachings of the Gospels and the policy of the Church were sufficiently flexible for Christianity to become, and to remain for a thousand years, one of the great warrior religions of humankind."²⁰

Yet for the first three centuries after Christ's death the early Church seemed to understand the "Gospel of Peace"²¹ to include the rejection of war and the State as a legitimate authority. Although more than one New Testament writer arguably enjoined obedience to Government,²² the Christian faith *did* subvert the authority of the State. The early Church put into operation Christ's idealism as best it could. As both private individual and political citizen, the faithful were obliged to respond to injury by turning the other cheek and disregard the consequences for the State.

²⁰ Howard 1989a, p.9.

²¹ Eph. 6:15.

²² e.g. Rom. 12:1-7, and I Peter 2:17.

This held good however much Christians appreciated the order established by Rome which enabled them to spread their new faith. Almost all Christian moralists saw war and the State as incompatible with the principles of peace with justice as laid open by Jesus Christ.²³ In this respect the early Church's method can be considered idealist in two main ways: first, because it was an 'idea', an abstraction, that transcended social arrangements and was subject to no political authority; and second, in the sense that it brought into popular life the idea of the essential fellowship of all human beings under God rather than Emperor. Christian hope, whether present or future, long deferred or imminent, lay ultimately in eschatology.²⁴ The

²³ See Latourette (Vol.I) 1937, p.293.

²⁴ Etymologically-speaking 'eschatology' delimitates the Christian discussion of 'Last Things' (traditionally: heaven, hell, judgement, eternal life). Theologically-speaking its significance is contested. On one hand, the term describes the orthodox belief in an 'end of the world' or a supernatural 'other-world'. Conservative commentators (e.g. Keith Ward in Harries [ed.] 1986b, p.82) tend to hold the term important insofar as it: (i) indicates a goal outside temporal concerns; and (ii) opposes the view that such a goal can be secured by human agency. Niebuhr (1941 p.67) concludes that 'God' as a concept cannot be understood without taking in the eschatological dimension vis "the ethical demands made by Jesus are incapable of fulfilment in the present existence of humanity." On the other hand however, eschatology suggests that the hope which relates Christians to the future cannot ignore the world and its future. In this respect it serves as a motif for 'this-world' social struggle -- a general term describing the hope for the end of the present order and the future destiny of society within history. The term hence covers all revolutionary expectations which: (i) speak of a radical discontinuity between the present age and the future (and thus are happy to speak of the end of the world); and (ii) views which want to stress continuity between the old order and the new within the fabric of human history (Rowland 1988, p.11). In this respect eschatology, prophecy, future-talk, the not-yet, future-orientation, become first words and dominant themes in theorising the CND's 'theology of hope'. Alan Race (1989) highlights three features of the nuclear age that make eschatological theorising a political priority: (i) the possibility of human extinction and irreparable damage to the planet; (ii) the need to reconsider human responsibility for the created order; and (iii) the need to rediscover human limitations in a technological sense. Marty and Peerman (eds.) 1968 provide a way into the 'secular' or

dominant concern of the Church, however, was not the legitimacy of social authority or political responsibility but the pursuit of orthodoxy and ecclesiastic order.

Throughout these first three centuries critics maintained that the Christian presence, its philosophy and its ethics, threatened the security of Rome's Empire. The Platonic philosopher Celsus in his *True Discourse* (written toward the latter part of the second century) argued that Christians were willing to accept the benefits of belonging to the Roman State yet were unwilling to discharge political responsibilities.²⁵ This was a common charge and one the early Fathers, particularly Tertullian, Origen, and Lactantius took great pains to refute.

The most important of the early Christians was the third century Carthaginian scholar, Tertullian (c.160-c.225). His writing makes clear that, even before Constantine, Christians were serving in the army and occupying State positions despite prohibitions against military service and the holding of public office.²⁶ In *The Apology* written in 197, Tertullian used this knowledge to rally against

'eschatological' theologies of Ernst Bloch, Jürgen Moltmann, and Roger Garaudy. Of interest is also Russell's (1948, p.382-3) note on the psychological importance of eschatology in radical political theory (e.g. Karl Marx's schema).

²⁵ Celsus's long and detailed criticism of Christianity is refuted point by point in Origen's eight books *Against Celsus*. See the translation in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* Vol.IV.

²⁶ This was because in both professions Christians would need to compromise with idolatrous practices. See Tertullian's *Apology*, Chap. 42, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* Vol.III; and the *Octavius* of Minucius Felix, Chap. 12, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* Vol.IV.

Celsus's criticisms by arguing that Christians supported the State in every conceivable way:

We have filled every place among you -- cities, islands, fortresses, towns, marketplaces, the very camp....We sail together with you, we go to war, we till the ground, we conduct business together with you.²⁷

Tertullian maintained that Christians were as good, if not better, citizens than any other. Christians were loyal subjects who offered prayers for the Emperor to have a long life, brave armies and a peaceful reign.²⁸ Any suggestion that they might rise against the State was unjust because Christians would "rather be killed than kill".²⁹ Such evidence suggests that substantial sections of the Church were not pacifist, at least in the modern sense, if there were those who could square military services with their consciences. In these passages Tertullian intimates that the ethical problem suggested by military service was not a live issue in the Church at this time. To be sure the powerful Church at Alexandria, for one, looked askance upon the reception of soldiers into its membership and believed enlistment was only possible in exceptional circumstances.³⁰ Yet as Latourette points out,³¹ it is necessary to note that Jews and slaves were legally disqualified from membership in

²⁷ Tertullian, *Apology*, Chap. 42, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol.III.

²⁸ Tertullian, *Apology*, Chaps. 30-33, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol.III.

²⁹ Tertullian, *Apology*, Chap. 42, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol.III.

³⁰ The thirteenth and fourteenth *Canons of the Church of Alexandria* state: "Of a prince or a soldier, that they be not received (to the Church) indiscriminately" and "That a Nazarene may not become a soldier unless by order" translated in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol.V, p.257.

³¹ Latourette (Vol.I) 1937, p.269.

the legion and such Christians as were drawn from these groups were ineligible for service anyway. (The Roman State could nearly always obtain as many soldiers as it wished through voluntary enlistment without recourse to Christian conscription.) The 'early' Tertullian thus tacitly condones soldiering and by implication the State-as-legitimate-authority. Tertullian, however, is particularly interesting because his position changed over time. By his later commentary, *De Corona* ("The Chaplet"), Tertullian had moved away from his early catholic position towards a much more confrontational attitude towards political authority.

Tertullian's Opposition

In "The Chaplet" (204) Tertullian is adamant that a soldier who converted to Christianity should give up military service.³² This was for several reasons. First, the soldier's 'sacred oath' of allegiance and loyalty to the State contradicted the baptismal vow. Christ taught that believers could not serve two masters.³³ Second, soldiering involved taking part in heathen ceremonies, idolatrous practices, and a 'morally loose' lifestyle. This made the military profession incompatible with obligations to God and family. Finally, taking the sword made it necessary to inflict punishment, when to a Christian revenge was forbidden. To shed blood whether as soldier or executioner,

³² Tertullian, *De Corona*, Chap. 11, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol.III.

³³ c.f. Matt. 6:24, Luke 16:13.

was contrary to Christ's commandment.³⁴ The significant point Tertullian was making was that Christian military service, on behalf of the State, was spiritually compromising. Although his 'new' position was still a spirited defence against Christianity's critics, it can also be considered an attack upon a hierarchically defined Church attitude to war. Young concludes³⁵ however, that Tertullian was less than consistent and in all probability a hypocrite. According to Young, Tertullian was happy to refute the suggestion that Christians were enemies of the State when addressing Romans, but equally happy to warn against military service if he was addressing a Christian audience. This view precludes the possibility that Tertullian had a change of heart in his later years.

For Tertullian the increasing moral laxity of converts signalled that the prevailing Christian orthodoxy was no longer to be trusted as the sole repository of the apostolic revelation. Legitimate authority belonged to those who possessed the Spirit and not simply to the bishops by virtue of their position. In this way he became a theological radical, a free-lance who saw no difference between clergy and laity, and a great denouncer of those who appealed in the Apologist tradition to secular Greco-Roman philosophy

³⁴ As Bailey reports several cases are recorded by both Christian and non-Christian authors of converted soldiers suffering martyrdom because of their unwillingness to renounce their allegiance to Christ. Bailey 1987, p.9.

³⁵ Young 1989, p.499.

for revelation. For Tertullian a true knowledge of God could be found through theological reflection coupled with social witness. Christians needed to struggle between the absolute individualism and the universalism that the Gospel demanded. In other words, the tension between private faith and political responsibility needed to be sternly faced and not avoided. Yet the issue that really exercised Tertullian was never war *per se* but war as a tool of illegitimate authority. Tertullian condemned military service not primarily on deontological grounds but in terms of the prevailing depravity and immorality of both State and Church. This is a major reason for his indifference, and even hostility, to Church and State which he saw as impure and spiritually defiled authorities. For these reasons Harnack categorises Tertullian as the innovator of a Christian attack on military service and political authority.³⁶

The Alexandrian philosopher Origen (184-254) also worked at rebutting pagan criticism. To Celsus, Christianity like Judaism, had originated as a violent rebellion against the State. It encouraged the frequent Barbarian rebellions against Rome. Origen was keen to repudiate both charge and comparison:

...if a revolt had led to the formation of the Christian commonwealth...the Christian Lawgiver would not have altogether forbidden the putting of men to death; and yet He nowhere teaches that it is right for His own disciples

³⁶ See Harnack 1981.

to offer violence to any one, however wicked....Jesus is, then, not the leader of any seditious movement, but the promoter of peace.³⁷

For Origen Celsus was free to see Judaism as violent, dangerous, and revolutionary because Christianity was passive, peaceful, and law-abiding. If all people were Christian, proclaimed Origen, even rebellious Barbarians would be rendered meek and mild. Whilst Christians should be exempt from military service on grounds similar to that of the Roman Priests (who kept their right hand pure for the sake of sacrificial purity) they were still politically responsible and always supported the State:

As we by our prayers vanquish all demons who stir up war, and lead to the violation of oaths, and disturb the peace, we go into the field to fight for them. And we do take our part in public affairs, when along with righteous prayers we join in self-denying exercises and meditations, which teach us to despise pleasures and not be led away by them. And none fight better for the king than we do. We do not indeed fight under him, although he require it; but we fight on his behalf, forming a special army of piety -- by offering our prayers to God.³⁸

For Origen the Scriptures were 'a vast ocean of mysteries' impossible to fathom, or even perceive completely, with every line replete with meaning and symbolism. In a practical sense he concluded that no interpretation could be true which did not promote the love of God or the love of His people.³⁹ In a mystical sense Christ's communion

³⁷ Origen, *Against Celsus*, Book III Chap. 7 and Book VIII Chap. 14, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol.IV.

³⁸ Origen, *Against Celsus*, Book VIII Chap. 73, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol.IV.

³⁹ On Origen see Kelly 1968, particularly pp.73-5 and pp.126-38.

compromised the whole of humanity, the whole of creation.⁴⁰ Origen's position, however, differed from Tertullian's in that it has been seen to be truly pacifist in its rationale. This is to say, as Kertesz argues, that based on his interpretation of the commandments of Christ and the teachings of the Bible, Origen was convinced that war was a great evil, it was wrong to take part in it, support or condone it in any way.⁴¹ Yet even this interpretation is problematic because Origen constantly 'spiritualizes' everything. Ultimately he believed that wars were caused by evil 'demons' and that the Emperor had a duty to maintain the law and order given him under God. The Christian's role was to fight the demons and support the State through prayer and spiritual exercises. Once the world was Christianised, the need for war would disappear.⁴²

The last of the great Christian writers to be considered in the period before Constantine was Lactantius (died AD 325). In his major work, *The Divine Institutes*, he writes:

...when God forbids us to kill, He not only prohibits us from open violence, which is not even allowed by the public laws, but He warns us against the commission of those things which are esteemed lawful among men. Thus it will be neither law-full for a just man to engage in warfare, since his warfare is justice itself, nor to accuse any one of a capital charge, because it makes no difference whether you put a man to death by word, or rather by the sword, since it is the act of putting to death itself which is prohibited. Therefore, with

⁴⁰ Kelly 1968, p.202.

⁴¹ Kertesz's pacifist label for Origen and definition of pacifism (Kertesz 1989, p.11 and p.162) is contentious in that it can be said that a "special army of piety" who prayed for Rome's military success was surely condoning war albeit war fought by non-Christians.

⁴² Young, 1989, p.500.

regard to this precept of God, there ought to be no exception at all; but that it is always unlawful to put to death a man, whom God willed to be a sacred animal.⁴³

Lactantius constitutes Christian political responsibility as standing over against Greco-Roman (i.e. realist-type) conceptions of order and rationality. The early Church was familiar with the Roman philosophers' ideas of universal reason, from Stoicism the conception of 'natural law'⁴⁴ (which the Apologists regarded as identical with the Christian moral law) was already passing into prominence in Christian political thought.⁴⁵ For Platonists and Stoics the need for order, enforced by the State through violence, was seen as the necessary expression of this rational 'natural law'. To Lactantius, however, free human will spoke not of the 'necessity' for such violence but the bestowal of love and the rejection of war.

Summary

All these thinkers can be theorised as idealist. This is because they had a particular vision of hope and change within a this-world future: a *telos*.⁴⁶ This desire for a

⁴³ Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, Book VI Chap. 20, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol.VIII.

⁴⁴ For a consideration of "Natural Law and International Ethics" see Boyle in Nardin and Mapel (eds.) 1992, pp.112-35.

⁴⁵ Troeltsch 1931, p.144. Niebuhr (1941, p.160) echoes Troeltsch's sentiments when he argues that Christianity had no social ethic until it appropriated the Stoic ethic. It is significant, as Russell informs (1948, p.285), that the Stoic gospel "was one of endurance rather than hope." To this might be added Nietzsche's observation that Christianity is thus "a Platonism for the people" (see Garaudy's "Communists and Christians in Dialogue" in Marty and Peerman [eds.] 1968 pp.212-21 for a discussion).

⁴⁶ See MacIntyre 1985, pp.54-5 for a relevant discussion of this concept.

new age was of central feature of New Testament writing. As Kelly explains the Christian hope, as delineated by the Biblical writers, was "a two-fold consciousness of blessing here and now in this time of waiting, and blessedness yet to come; and the final denouement was conceived realistically as a series of events to be carried out by God on the plane of history."⁴⁷ Yet the message is confused, the evidence complex, and firm conclusions difficult to draw.

There is little evidence to suggest Christ founded a 'peace movement'. Theoretically, Christ's teaching was idealistic and at odds with the demands of the militaristic political order. Believers were loyal to God not State and rejected its universalist claims. Christianity, by bringing the Church into existence, was thus an institution whose principles rivalled, if not physically menaced, existing political authority. Yet practically, whilst many Christians rejected military service, they did not see it as the abnegation of their political responsibilities. The convert was opposing a specific demand of the State, not its general right to rule which the Church seemed to qualify. It is noteworthy that no Christian rebellion were aroused by the repeated and often violent persecutions of the first three centuries.⁴⁸ Apologists insisted that the State owed its stability and prosperity to their faith.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Kelly 1968, pp.459-60.

⁴⁸ Cadoux 1925, p.101.

⁴⁹ Troeltsch has pointed out that the true temper of the time was actually conservative precisely because the message of Jesus was not a

It is necessary to conclude that the early Church was generally a pacific-ist but not pacifist organisation. Its efforts to represent Christ's message did, nevertheless, give life to a subversive, idealist inheritance that pointed towards a Christian role in challenging secular attitudes to the State, political responsibility, and war. It was these elements that Augustine challenged with his fourth century formulations. Arendt argues it was Augustine who transformed Christianity from these utopian and anti-State impulses into a great and stable political institution: "That this was possible without the complete perversion of the Gospel was almost wholly due to Augustine, who, though hardly the father of the Western concept of history, is probably the spiritual author and certainly the greatest theorist of Christian politics."⁵⁰

Part II: Augustine's Just War

In the fourth and fifth centuries Christian attitudes to the State, questions of authority, legitimacy, and political responsibility underwent a radical transformation. Beginning with the conversion of the Emperor Constantine in AD 312,⁵¹

programme of revolution, reform, or justice but principally a summons to prepare for the coming of the Kingdom of God. Troeltsch 1931, pp.55-9 and pp.126-8.

⁵⁰ Arendt 1993, p.73. For a similar conclusion see Knowles 1971, pp.19-20.

⁵¹ According to the story Constantine received a vision in which he was informed that if he marked his standard with the sign of the cross he would be assured of victory in his battles. Constantine's subsequent successes in war were from then on were ascribed to the fact that he had adopted the Christian faith, see Kertesz 1989, p.13; and Latourette (Vol.I) 1937, pp.158-9. Most theologians and Church historians agree that 312 is the correct date for Constantine's conversion, but at least one just war

followed by the adoption of Christianity⁵² as the official Roman religion in 380, the distinction between Church and State largely ceased. The Constantinian revolution can be theorised as an attempt on the part of the State to take over the Church.⁵³ Prior to this détente the Church was a persecuted body struggling to adapt to its social environment whilst fighting off intellectual challengers to its developing world-view. The Church's new relation to the State meant, as Kelly observes⁵⁴, that the success or failure of a doctrine might now hinge upon the favour of the reigning emperor. Yet it remains true that Christianity was adopted by Rome without a substantial shift in the application of its politics, power, or ideology.⁵⁵ For Christians the conversion of Constantine led to the assumption that if a State no longer persecuted the Church, it was a sure sign of it being a legitimate authority. The Roman Empire's adoption of Christianity, however, led to compromise, accommodation, and the institutionalisation of faith. It marginalised a Christian nostalgia for utopian discipleship, and the conviction that a reign of God was possible on earth. The Church became society.⁵⁶ Christians were now free to see themselves as "the salvation of the

philosopher (i.e. Santoni 1991, p.83) however, cites Constantine's conversion in 337 -- the year of his death.

⁵² The Edict of Thessalonica (under the joint rule of Emperors Theodosius I, Gratian, and Valentinian) made Christianity the official religion. See Latourette (Vol.I) 1937, pp.180-2.

⁵³ Hall 1986, p.117.

⁵⁴ Kelly 1968, p.237.

⁵⁵ Rowland 1988, p.14.

⁵⁶ For an extended analysis of this perspective on the rise of Christian Europe see Hall 1986, pp.111-44.

commonwealth"⁵⁷ rather than constituting an idealist opposition to it.

Historically, the context was one in which Rome was besieged by Germanic barbarians. The sacking of Rome by Alaric the Visigoth in AD 410 brought dramatic proof that the Roman State's political, administrative, and military system was in terminal decline. For Roman pagans the barbarians success increased the legitimacy of their claim that Christian attitudes to questions of political authority and responsibility weakened the State.

Saint Aurelius Augustine, bishop of Hippo (354-430) responded to this momentous event by composing his *magnum opus* the *City of God*. Like previous Christian Apologies the *City of God* was written as a response to pagan charges of Christian culpability in the decline of Rome. Yet the *City of God* was more than an defence of the Catholic Church and a call for spiritual regeneration. It was a systematic attempt to establish one orthodoxy that would help Christians define the State and everything it stood for. With a characteristic verve Augustine shifted attention away from discussing whether a Christian should be allowed to serve in the army to the kind of force that was acceptable to the Church. For Augustine sharing in the ambiguities of power included the revision of attitudes towards the State's monopoly of violence.

⁵⁷ Augustine's "Reply to Faustus the Manichean" in Schaff (ed.) 1979, Vol. IV.

Augustine was essentially a polemicist. He set out to refute blatant heresies, criticism against Christianity, and erroneous teachings that threatened the establishment of "sound doctrine."⁵⁸ Previous to this period, as was shown above, the attitude of Christians to social authority, political responsibility, and war was divided. The idealism of Tertullian, Origen and Lactantius were not explicit heresies as such but rather, as Hartigan suggests, "tenaciously maintained positions which orthodox Christians could support with ample New Testament authority and a substantial theological tradition."⁵⁹ What marks the *Civitas Dei* is the repudiation of their view that individual or collective felicity was of theological concern.

Augustine wished to savage the idea that following the Christianisation of Rome God had assigned a special divine role, whether positive or negative, for political authorities. The State's legal and institutional adoption of Christianity was theologically neutral: it would neither bring an end to war and conflict or usher in an age of ever-lasting temporal peace. The chief end of humanity was simply to glorify God. Augustine's whole work turns on this contrast between worldly and other-worldly motives.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Augustine's *Confessions* 1961, Book VII Chap.19.

⁵⁹ Hartigan 1966, p.196.

⁶⁰ Figgis 1921, p.9. Also see Deane 1963; Markus 1970; Epp's 1990 PhD.

The Roots of *Just War* Thinking

It is widely accepted that Augustine was the formal instigator of *just war* theory. Robert Holmes, for instance, accuses Augustine of being "Christianity's principal philosopher of war" who "turn[ed] Christ's teaching on its head."⁶¹ Santoni describes him as "the pivotal thinker in Christianity's move from its early pacifism⁶² to its acceptance of some wars as justifiable"⁶³, whilst Jenny Teichman deplores the "heavy blows" dealt to the "quasi-pacifist aspects of Christianity."⁶⁴ James Turner Johnson concludes that Augustine "recast Roman (and Hebraic) ideas on war into a Christian mould while erecting a systematic moral justification for Christian participation in violence."⁶⁵

Theoretically, Augustine drew upon the Old Testament paradigm of war commanded by God⁶⁶, the ideas of Saint Ambrose (the pioneer in asserting the claims of the Church *vis-à-vis* the State in the post-Constantine era⁶⁷), and established Roman positions on the circumstances in which war could or should be legitimately waged. He addressed two particular issues: first, was it possible for the Christian to wage war

⁶¹ Holmes 1989, pp.166, 117.

⁶² Santoni defines the Christian's renunciation of violence and refusal to serve in the army as the acceptance of "a form of pacifism" (Santoni 1991, p.83). Above has suggested this to be a contentious definition but the essential thrust of his argument is applicable.

⁶³ Santoni 1991, p.84.

⁶⁴ Teichman 1986, p.47.

⁶⁵ Johnson 1981, p.xxiv.

⁶⁶ Andrew Chester (1989) provides a complementary discussion of the themes of peace and war in the Old Testament

⁶⁷ On Saint Ambrose and his role in *just war* ideas see Bailey 1987, p.11; Kertesz 1989, p.19.

without sinning? Second, what constraints should be put upon the conduct of the Christian if war was waged? War was divided into two classes: those that were just and those that were unjust. Augustine understood just war as the appropriate response by Christians, as individuals and as part of Church and State, to international conflict.

According to Augustine "the wretched condition of humanity in this life" is the "punishment for sin."⁶⁸ Death, misery, suffering, war, robbery, and violence were all penal consequences of sin: they were inherent and unavoidable aspects of the human condition.⁶⁹ Political authority, however, was instigated by God to provide the element of order, stability, and peace necessary in this 'anarchical' world rendered no longer spontaneous by the Fall. Two presuppositions are paramount here.

First, a pessimistic "metaphysics of fallen man"⁷⁰ -- the idea of the moral culpability of humanity, the sense that humans are ineradicably biased towards evil. The causes of war are not rooted in 'politics' but within a corrupted human nature. A just war is waged so that wicked people may be overcome by kindness, or rather that the evil which is in the

⁶⁸ Augustine 1972, Book XXII Chap.24.

⁶⁹ e.g. Augustine 1972, Book XII Chap.14; Book XV Chap.4; and Book XIX Chap.15.

⁷⁰ The phrase is Ashley's 1981, p.217. Both Holsti in Kegley (ed.) 1995, p.38; and Booth in Booth and Smith (eds.) 1995, p.333 follow Ashley in suggesting that this Augustinian sense of human nature informs every facet of classical realism. To quote Niebuhr (1964, p.83): "where there is history at all there is freedom; and where there is freedom there is sin". On the 'Fall' see Genesis 3. Analysis in Russell 1948, p.384; Kelly 1968, pp.344-74; Deane 1963, pp.13-77; Epp's 1990 PhD, pp.27-32; and McGrath 1997, pp.425-6.

wicked may be overcome by good, and that the 'just' may be delivered from evil. Power and its pursuit by individuals and States is unavoidable because "such is the instability of human affairs that no people has ever been allowed such a degree of tranquillity as to remove all dread of hostile attacks on their life in this world."⁷¹ Augustine arguably ascribed, in a mechanical deterministic fashion, an ahistorical universality to human behaviour. This deep-rooted evil behaviour, however, was restricted to the biographies of individuals not groups or organisations.⁷² Where the 'late' Tertullian, in particular, began in communitarian fashion with the salvation of individuals within society, Augustine began with the salvation of isolated individuals outside society. As Markus acknowledges, "human society is irremediably rooted in a tension-ridden and disordered condition where there can be no resolution, save eschatologically."⁷³

Second, the idea that the State is a necessary bulwark against sin, and sin is something that can be controlled by rational government.⁷⁴ Political authority was to be accepted

⁷¹ Augustine 1972, Book XVII Chap.13.

⁷² Whilst Figgis (1921, p.43), for example, accepts that Augustine "reduces all to individualism", he rejects the idea that the concept of predestinarianism is 'deterministic' (pp.45-6) because Adam's sin was not 'predetermined'. A position endorsed by both Epp's PhD, p.28; and Deane 1963, p.114. Yet such abstract metaphysical conjuncture is socially irrelevant. In an empirical sense Augustine opened the way for the justification of all forms of oppression in the here and now with his fatalistic concept of 'original sin'.

⁷³ Markus 1970, p.83.

⁷⁴ e.g. Augustine 1972, Book XI Chaps.1-2; and Book XIX Chaps.13 and 17.

as both punishment and remedy for sin.⁷⁵ Here "the idea of original sin as individual and ahistorical", as Milbank reveals, "merges with the notion of government as a technical manipulation of chaotic human forces. Organised power is strangely seen as itself immune from this taint, and is absurdly imagined that it can keep the effects of this taint 'under control'."⁷⁶ Augustine believed that without order, legal institutions, and private property society would collapse into chaos. Political authority was divinely instituted, for the benefit of the individual, in order to serve as the criterion for authority and establish the 'relative' justice possible in this-world.⁷⁷ Here there is a 'dilemma' between what is possible, given political 'necessity', and what is desirable in an absolute (i.e. other-world) sense. State utility appears superior to morality and Augustinian metaphysics (Christian, idealist, and absolutist) move perceptibly into a utilitarian (realist, pragmatic, and calculating) viewpoint. The rational analysis of this dichotomy led Augustine to the concept of just war waged in obedience to a series of stipulative requirements. On one

⁷⁵ c.f. Romans 13:1, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God."

⁷⁶ Milbank 1986, p.17. Though Milbank is referring to Niebuhr and the modern multilateralists with this criticism (Potter 1970, p.108: "The same old Niebuhrian questions, are to a great extent, the same old Augustinian questions") the analysis remains relevant.

⁷⁷ e.g. Augustine 1972, Book IV Chap.3; and his letter to Marcellinus (CXXXVIII) in Schaff (ed.) 1979, Vol.I. Also see the analysis on Augustine's Platonic conception of 'relative justice' in Foster 1969, p.204; Williams 1992, p.27; Hare and Joynt 1982, p.59. Also see Niebuhr 1944, p.xiii: "Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible; but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary".

hand, deterrence or encouraging 'evil' people to respect one another's rights, and on the other, the goal of the State to ensure just retribution. As Williams notes: "Augustine's starting-point is realism's starting-point: a divorce between the actual and the desirable."⁷⁸

The State's Duty to Preserve the Status Quo

Given that Augustine saw a fundamental imbalance in the state of nature between people's needs and their capacity to satisfy them⁷⁹, it is not surprising that he saw international affairs as a realm in which relations between States were fraught with difficulties.⁸⁰ In this 'natural order' civil authorities had been provided with the power and means to perform military duties in order to secure the safety of the community.⁸¹ The State had a God-given duty to safeguard the social good and a responsibility to resort to force if threatened. Obedience to rulers, consequently, was in the common interest and the Christian should only disobey laws if they contravened God's law.⁸² War and violence, like greed and injustice, was inevitable and the prophecy that God "maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth"⁸³:

⁷⁸ Williams 1992, p.27.

⁷⁹ c.f. Hobbes's *Leviathan* for similar sentiments.

⁸⁰ e.g. Augustine 1972, Book XIX Chap.7; and Book XVI Chap.4. Commentary in Deane 1963, p.168; and Cartwright's "Biblical Arguments in International Ethics" in Nardin and Mapel (eds.) 1992, pp.275-6.

⁸¹ Augustine's "Reply to Faustus the Manichaeon" Book XXII Chap.75 in Schaff (ed.) 1979, Vol.IV.

⁸² e.g. Augustine 1961, Book III Chap.8; and Augustine 1972, Book V Chap.17. C.f. attitudes to the sacrifice of Christian martyrs in Augustine 1972, Book VII Chap.19.

⁸³ *The Book of Psalms* 46:9.

This not yet see we fulfilled: yet are there wars, wars among nations for sovereignty; among sects, among Jews, Pagans, Christians, heretics, are wars, frequent wars, some for the truth, some for falsehood contending. Not yet then is this fulfilled...but happily it shall be fulfilled.⁸⁴

As this quotation suggests Augustine believed that not only were wars inevitable but that some wars were 'relatively just' and defensible. In this way no matter how evil or unjust the cause, war does not escape the net of God's Providence. Deane notes: "Just as God does not force men to sin -- to rob, to kill, to injure one another -- and yet regulates and uses their sinful actions so that they become instruments for carrying out His eternal designs for the world, so He permits states and rulers, even if they are acting unjustly, to wage war only insofar as their battles and campaigns contribute to His ends -- the punishment of the wicked and the testing and training of the good."⁸⁵

War as Lesser of Two Evils

Because war has a tendency to engender great evil, for Augustine, the resort to violence in order to secure temporal order alone was never sufficient justification. Yet peace or order was always the object of desire when war was waged.⁸⁶ The issue was not peace per se but rather the type of peace

⁸⁴ Augustine's exposition on "Psalm XLVI" in Schaff (ed.) 1979, Vol.VIII. Also see commentary by Deane 1963, pp.155-6; and Markus 1970, p.52. Deane wrongly cites the Psalm as XLV.

⁸⁵ Deane 1963, p.157.

⁸⁶ Childress in Harries 1986b, p.125 makes the point that the principle of order is used interchangeably with peace in Augustinian (i.e. Niebuhrian) accounts.

sought.⁸⁷ Most of the wars waged between states are, consequently, in no sense 'just' but internecine quarrels.⁸⁸ Augustine was quite aware of the suffering caused by war and convinced the State's recourse to war had always to be the lesser of 'two evils':

But the wise man, they say, will wage just wars. Surely, if he remembers that he is a human being, he will rather lament the fact that he is faced with the necessity of waging just wars; for if they were not just, he would not have to engage in them, and consequently there would be no wars for a wise man. For it is the injustice of the opposing side that lays on the wise man the duty of waging wars; and this injustice is assuredly to be deplored by a human being, since it is the injustice of human beings, even though no necessity for war should arise from it. And so everyone who reflects with sorrow on such grievous evils, in all their horror and cruelty, must acknowledge the misery of them. And yet a man who experiences such evils, or even thinks about them, without heartfelt grief, is assuredly in a far more pitiable condition, if he thinks himself happy simply because he has lost all human feeling.⁸⁹

War was so dreadful that conquest, glory, or wealth were not justifiable reasons for war.⁹⁰ It was only justifiable in order to correct wrongdoing and ensure injustice did not flourish. War must be waged as a necessity, and waged only that God may by it deliver people from that necessity and preserve them in peace.⁹¹

Augustine offered four suggestions for determining whether or not a war was just. First, all defensive war was automatically just. Aggression was a breach of peace and

⁸⁷ Augustine 1972, Book XIX Chap.12.

⁸⁸ Deane 1963, p.157.

⁸⁹ Augustine 1972, Book XIX Chap.7

⁹⁰ Augustine 1972, Book IV Chap.6.

⁹¹ Augustine to Boniface (letter CLXXXIX) in Schaff (ed.) 1979, Vol.1.

self-defence a legitimate response to that breach. The meaning of peace was summed in terms of the preservation of the *status quo*. Self-defence was a proper justification for attacking another State (Augustine does not discuss the problems involved in determining the aggressor⁹²). Second, an offensive war was just so long as it was waged against a State who refused to make reparations for wrongs committed. In this case war was "acted not in cruelty, but in righteous retribution, giving to all what they deserved, and warning those who needed warning"⁹³. Referring to Rome's First Punic War with Carthage, Augustine felt:

Now obviously the Romans had a just excuse for undertaking and carrying on these great wars. When they were subjected to unprovoked attacks by their enemies, they were forced to resist not by lust for glory in men's eyes but by the necessity to defend their life and liberty.⁹⁴

Third, an offensive war was also just if waged against a State who violated property-rights: "If some nation or some state which is warred upon has failed either to make reparation for an injurious action committed by its citizens or to return what has been wrongly appropriated."⁹⁵ Augustine conflates private property with 'absolute dominion': because property is enforced by the law of the State, individuals must hold to

⁹² Deane 1963, p.162.

⁹³ Augustine's "Reply to Faustus the Manichaeon" Book XXII Chap.74 in Schaff (ed.) 1979, Vol.IV.

⁹⁴ Augustine 1972, Book III Chap.10.

⁹⁵ Augustine's *Quaestionum in Heptateuchum* Book VI Chap.10. Translated and cited by Deane 1963, p.312.

that law. (This pagan conception of absolute property became the foundation of modern capitalism.⁹⁶)

The final criteria Augustine believed in determining whether a war was just was that, following Cicero (106-43 BC), the ideal State should never engage in war except in defence of its honour or safety. According to Cicero although death often rescued individuals from pain (instead of bringing disaster) the death of a whole community was always a disaster.⁹⁷ War was justifiable if it stopped an individual from misusing their liberty, or alternatively, protected the innocent. The reluctant and limited use of force was thus a charitable response by Christians to the needs of an innocent neighbour assailed by an aggressive power.

Augustine's criteria seems to suggest that, for Rome's Christian leaders, the loss of political power was a greater 'evil' than war itself. This tough and pragmatic decision making -- namely, that some wars are just if they are necessary to avenge injuries and maintain the earthly *status quo* -- signalled the birth of *just war* thinking. The *just war* became a form of punishment inflicted when a State's behaviour violated the norms of temporal order. As Williams argues:

A State may justly wage a war where its own existence is threatened or the established order is placed in doubt. Although we cannot be sure that the existing world order is divinely sanctioned we can be sure that there is a

⁹⁶ See Figgis 1921, pp.53 and 99 for a discussion.

⁹⁷ Augustine 1972, Book XXII Chap. 6.

relative temporal obligation to uphold whatever order exists.⁹⁸

In these ways Augustine moved the Christian analysis of war away from the early Fathers ambivalence towards political authority. Such analysis presupposes that for war to be just the individual has to believe that the State or order which is being fought for, equals the best 'relative' justice available.

Legitimate Authority

To counter the quasi-pacifism of Origen, Tertullian, and Lactantius, Augustine needed to justify why the idea of *just* war did not contradict Gospel precepts. On one hand, he needed to establish why Christians must obey political authority. On the other hand, he needed to establish the right of Christians to kill for political authority. Augustine set to do this by declaring a personal form of pacifism insofar as the Christian individual was concerned. In doing so he prefigured Weber by erecting a conceptual barrier between private and public imperatives. This approach subscribed to a dualism of Christian faith (ethics) and social life (politics).

To Augustine the act of murder (i.e. the taking of life in a private capacity) was a heinous crime always regarded as evil. This 'natural law' would be so even if civil law permitted it. He asserts differences between two types of

⁹⁸ Williams 1992, p.29.

law: temporal and eternal. Temporal (secular) law offers inadequate Christian guidance. Eternal law (Christ's law of love) enshrines all human life as inviolate. Because Christian salvation was sought beyond history the individual was literally enjoined to turn 'the other cheek' when personal rights were violated even if the assailant or aggressor was particularly evil.⁹⁹ Passivity and stoicism in the face of adversity was called for.¹⁰⁰ Although this meant that a Christian was forbidden from killing in a private capacity they were, however, permitted to do so if acting on the behalf of a legitimate political authority. Augustine confirmed this principle in a letter:

As to killing others in order to defend one's own life, I do not approve of this, unless one happen to be a soldier or public functionary acting, not for himself but in defence of others or of the city in which he resides, if he acts according to the commission lawfully given him, and in the manner becoming his office.¹⁰¹

Augustine established the needs of 'legitimate authority' as a necessary exception to the general prohibition against the taking of human life. This is because the Christian 'warrior' makes war not for themselves but out of love for others. It is "these precepts [that] pertain rather to the inward disposition of the heart than to the actions which are done in the sight of men."¹⁰² As Roland Bainton puts it: "The inwardness of Augustine's ethic served to justify outward

⁹⁹ Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff 1990, p.194.

¹⁰⁰ Cadoux 1919, pp.49-66 and pp.102-60, pp.255-57.

¹⁰¹ Augustine to Publicola (letter XLVII) in Schaff (ed.) 1979, Vol.I.

¹⁰² Augustine to Marcellinus (letter CXXXVIII) in Schaff (ed.) 1979, Vol.I.

violence, because right and wrong were seen to reside not in acts but in attitudes."¹⁰³

The definitive expression of Augustine's notion that homicide committed on behalf of the State is not murder appears in an early chapter in *De Civitas Dei*:

There are however certain exception to the law against killing, made by the authority of God himself. There are some whose killing God orders, either by a law, or by an express command to a particular person at a particular time. In fact one who owes a duty of obedience to the giver of the command does not himself 'kill' -- he is an instrument, a sword in its user's hand. For this reason the commandment forbidding killing was not broken by those who have waged wars on the authority of God, or those who have imposed the death-penalty on criminals when representing the authority of the State in accordance with the laws of the State, the justest and most reasonable source of power.¹⁰⁴

Augustine affirms that the soldier or politician, when acting in an official capacity, is not morally culpable for their actions. This is because they are ethically obliged to bow to a greater wisdom: the wisdom personified by legitimate authority -- the State. This means: first, even an unrighteous command on the part of the politician must be obeyed by the soldier because their vocation makes obedience a duty.¹⁰⁵ And second the politician who, perhaps through errors of judgement, condemns the innocent to death should simply acknowledge the wretchedness of their responsibility and pray to God "Deliver me from my necessities!"¹⁰⁶ Because the

¹⁰³ Bainton 1960, p.92.

¹⁰⁴ Augustine 1972, Book I Chap.21.

¹⁰⁵ Augustine's "Reply to Faustus the Manichaeon" Book XXII Chap.75 in Schaff (ed.) 1979, Vol.IV.

¹⁰⁶ Augustine's advice given to a judge who has executed an innocent man in Augustine 1972, Book XIX Chap.6.

soldier and politician are not morally free agents they perform their duties in automaton fashion, in the manner of a executioner. This, unfortunately, is also the traditional defence of those who commit atrocities and claim they were 'only' following orders.¹⁰⁷ As Hartigen states: "The requirement to vindicate justice in the public realm seems to supersede the demands of charity which should obtain in the Christian's private life."¹⁰⁸

The Christian pacifist's policy of non-resistance appeared to Augustine as "mere cowardly dislike [of death], not any religious feeling"¹⁰⁹. Because all are destined to die, death was not to be regarded as the great evil involved in war. The pacifist's worse sin was not 'political irresponsibility' but that they shunned conflict and proposed capitulation to 'tyranny', individually and collectively, at the price of subjection to injustice.¹¹⁰ The breakdown of social and political norms caused by pacifist 'anarchy' would be the worst of all possible earthly evils.¹¹¹ By waging war Christians were actually doing an 'aggressor' a service:

¹⁰⁷ See Walzer 1977, pp.287-324 on this aspect of responsibility.

¹⁰⁸ Hartigan 1966, p.200.

¹⁰⁹ Augustine's "Reply to Faustus the Manichaeon" Book XXII Chap.74 in Schaff (ed.) 1979, Vol.IV.

¹¹⁰ c.f. Niebuhr 1957, p.277: "It [thus] becomes rather ignoble when the idealist suggests that others besides himself shall be sold into slavery and shall groan under the tyrant's heel."

¹¹¹ Augustine 1961, Book III Chap.8. Deane 1963, p.161. C.f. Weber in Gerth and C. Wright Mills (eds.) 1991, p.334: "The Sermon on the Mount says 'resist no evil.' In opposition, the State asserts: 'You shall help right to triumph by the use of force, otherwise you too may be responsible for injustice.' Where this factor is absent, the 'State' is also absent; the 'anarchism' of the pacifist will have then come to life."

...many things must be done in correcting with a certain benevolent severity, even against their own wishes, men whose welfare rather than their wishes it is our duty to consult; and the Christian scriptures have most unambiguously commanded this virtue in a magistrate.... And on this principle, if the commonwealth observe the precepts of the Christian religion, even its wars themselves will not be carried on without the benevolent design that, after the resisting nations have been conquered, provision may be more easily made for enjoying in peace the mutual body of piety and love.¹¹²

Augustine's stark dichotomy between individual and collective responsibility, juxtaposed with an acceptance of the State as a legitimate authority, forms the basis for his consideration of war itself.

Retribution

Above has shown that the 'politician' and they alone, have the right and duty to judge whether another country has violated the 'natural order' and must be punished. Political authority, not the private individual, was the only legitimate initiator of violent hostilities. For Deane: "The major difficulty in this solution of the problem is, of course, that the ruler is one of the parties to the dispute, and yet he must also act as the judge who decides whether or not the other state is guilty of injustice and whether its wrongdoing is great enough to warrant the infliction of punishment."¹¹³

Augustine saw an intimate connection between social and moral orders, a sin against the former logically involved sinning against the latter too. If one State violated the

¹¹² Augustine to Marcellinus (letter CXXXVIII) in Schaff (ed.) 1979, Vol.I.

¹¹³ Deane 1963, p.162.

legal sovereignty of another it had broken 'natural law'. "This", as Hartigan reveals, "is the essential fact which explains why for Augustine just war is action designed above all else to restore a violated moral order. It also explains his emphasis on the subjective guilt or *culpa* of the enemy, which not only justifies the use of force but indeed requires it."¹¹⁴ As Deane notes: "the just war is the punishment imposed upon a state and upon its rulers when their behaviour is so aggressive or avaricious that it violates even the norms of temporal justice."¹¹⁵ For the limited peace created to be reinstated, it is sometimes necessary to employ force. Augustine, therefore, justified war in the same terms he used to justify criminal punishment.¹¹⁶ The authority for waging war was the same as for meting out punishment for criminal behaviour. The end to be achieved through a just war was the re-establishment of the exiting peace, but the means employed nevertheless provided a suitable chastisement of those presumptuous enough to disturb the *status quo*. This "forfeiture of rights" appears as punishment.¹¹⁷

When one State injured another, or failed to make reparations for its wrong doings or the wrongdoings committed by its citizens, the aggrieved State had a 'just' reason for punishing the State in the same way it was 'justified' in

¹¹⁴ Hartigan 1966, p.199.

¹¹⁵ Deane 1963, p.156.

¹¹⁶ See Deane 1963, pp.95-7, 134-6, and 138-41.

¹¹⁷ Norman 1996, p.123.

inflicting pain or death on domestic criminals. "Those wars are normally called just" writes Augustine "which avenge injuries."¹¹⁸

Conduct

Richard Hartigan observed: "It is surprising...to turn to the actual statements of St. Augustine on the permissibility of killing innocents in war to discover that he exhibited an unexpected degree of harshness and seeming indifference to the fate of the innocent."¹¹⁹ Although Augustine affirmed the concept of just or righteous war under certain conditions, he was still concerned with how political authorities conducted war.

Augustine believed wars could be just and as such, served as an instrument of God's purpose. Whilst all war was an inevitable product of sinful human nature some wars were more defensible than others. Not only were some wars fought for just ("truth"), and others for unjust ("for falsehood contending") reasons, when force was used justly it was a good not an evil. He carefully distinguished between discriminate and indiscriminate use of State violence.

The Christian was to wage war with moderation, to show mercy to prisoners and the vanquished. Cruelty was incompatible with just war fighting. To Augustine the State, if it was to wage war, must do so with 'kindness'. In this

¹¹⁸ Deane's translation of Augustine's *Questionem in Heptateuchum* (Book VI Chap.10) in Deane 1963, p.160.

¹¹⁹ Hartigan 1966, p.195.

respect he made a distinction between the possession of weapons (deterrence) and their use (war-fighting).¹²⁰ War could only be just in relation to the 'natural laws' that governed human society. It was never morally attractive and could render unjust even the most just of causes. The question here, as Hartigan points out¹²¹ is, if war is a necessary means of achieving a temporal peace, then why does Augustine also consider it evil? Augustine, however, stated that the real problem was not war *per se* but rather "the real evils in war are love of violence, revengeful cruelty, fierce and implacable enmity, wild resistance, and the lust of power."¹²²

Augustine valued the physical evil of war less than the moral lapses brought about by its prosecution. Yet he showed abhorrence to the cruelties and atrocities common to war. The normal customs of war: the looting, pillaging, slaughter of children and women, the killing of prisoners, and cruelties of every description were to be avoided by Christians.¹²³ This is why Augustine demanded that the Christian soldier killed only out of necessity, and never choice: "As violence is used towards him who rebels and resists, so mercy is due to the

¹²⁰ Bailey 1987, p.12.

¹²¹ Hartigan 1966, p.198.

¹²² Augustine's "Reply to Faustus the Manichaeon" Book XXII Chap.74 in Schaff (ed.) 1979, Vol.IV.

¹²³ Augustine 1972, Books I Chap.4 and 5; V Chap.23; and his letter to Marcellinus (CXXXVIII) in Schaff (ed.) 1979, Vol.I.

vanquished or the captive, especially in the case in which future troubling of the peace is not to be feared."¹²⁴

Augustine is nevertheless insistent that soldiers should not determine the justice of war for themselves.¹²⁵ To do so would invite anarchy and desertion of duty and throw a State or an army into utter confusion.¹²⁶ This has led Der Derian to argue that Augustine was a 'crusader' because "Cicero's concept of proportional violence was diminished in favour of a militant piety, as would be proven in the holy wars."¹²⁷ As Hartigan puts it: "Just war...becomes a crusade of retribution in which the enemy population's guilt may be presumed. The death of the 'innocents' is an accidental consequence of the just act of war."¹²⁸

Yet because the *just war* was waged for honourable or defensive reasons Augustine was confident that, both in the conduct of the war and in the establishment of the peace, the just State would strive to punish the evildoers and the aggressors without being cruel, vengeful, or avaricious. He follows his conflation of social and State morality by concluding that an unjust war would not be fought by a just State "for peace is not sought in order to the kindling of war, but war is waged in order that peace may be obtained."¹²⁹

¹²⁴ Augustine to Boniface (letter CLXXXIX) in Schaff (ed.) 1979, Vol.I.

¹²⁵ Augustine's "Reply to Faustus the Manichaeon" Book XXII Chap.75 in Schaff (ed.) 1979, Vol.IV.

¹²⁶ Deane 1963, p.163.

¹²⁷ Der Derian 1987, p.63.

¹²⁸ Hartigan 1966, p.204.

¹²⁹ Augustine to Boniface (letter CLXXXIX) in Schaff (ed.) 1979, Vol.1. Hartigan (1966 p.198) references this passage but wrongly accredits as Augustine to Marcellinius (letter CXXXVIII).

Whilst Augustine acknowledged that the innocent should be protected he also believed that it was not so much of a problem because they would be in a small minority in the unjust State.¹³⁰

Augustine felt that the deaths caused by war were not the real evils to be shunned and thought it lamentable, but not condemnable, that the good and wicked would suffer the same consequences. In both cases the punishment of war was a rough justice in which the innocent suffered with the guilty. The death of good and bad alike justified because:

...although the good dislike the way of life of the wicked, and therefore do not fall into the condemnation which is in store for the wicked after this life, nevertheless, because they are tender towards damnable sins of the wicked, and thus fall into sin through fear of such people (pardonable and comparatively trivial though those sins may be), they are justly chastised with afflictions in this world, although they are spared eternal punishment;...¹³¹

Augustine's refusal to recommend mercy over justice, until victory was assured and just peace restored, is a striking feature of his writing.¹³²

In conducting wars, as in peaceful relations with other States, government should also fulfil and guard the agreements, treaties, and conventions made by friends and enemies alike: "For, when faith is pledged, it is to be kept

¹³⁰ c.f. Richard Hartigan's discussion of "The Problem of the Innocent" in Hartigan 1966, pp.201-4; and Deane 1963, pp.154-71.

¹³¹ Augustine Book I Chap.9.

¹³² Hartigan (1966 p.202) confirms this by acknowledging that he has been unable to find a single instance in any of Augustine's writings on war wherein he recommends that mercy should ever replace justice in dealings with an enemy.

even with the enemy against whom the war is waged, how much more with the friend for whom the battle is fought!"¹³³.

The Development of Augustine's Ideas

Above has shown that Augustine's efforts to reconcile Christ's teaching with the participation of Christians in certain wars led him to become the founder of a theory of rights in warfare known as *just war*. Christian attitudes to war have largely been determined by this tradition. "Thus Augustine," according to Niebuhr, "whatever may be the defects of his approach to political reality, and whatever may be the dangers of a too slavish devotion to his insights, nevertheless proves himself a more reliable guide than any known thinker."¹³⁴ Over time the term *just war* was applied both to a Western line of moral thinking on war and to its specifically Christian component.

Throughout the medieval period and into the modern age scholars and lawyers¹³⁵ refined Augustine's ideas. In the Middle Ages the most important of these scholars were St. Thomas Aquinas and Vitoria who stressed six principles for a *just war*: (i) war must be waged by a legitimate authority; (ii) it must be proportionately worse not to fight than fight; (iii) it must be undertaken with the right desire --

¹³³ Augustine to Boniface (letter CLXXXIX) in Schaff (ed.) 1979, Vol.I.

¹³⁴ "Augustine's Political Realism" in Niebuhr 1953, p.138.

¹³⁵ For an interesting commentary see Oestreicher's essay in Martin and Mullen (eds.) 1983. For more detail see Tooke 1965. Walzer 1977 provides a provocative modern application of these ideas whilst Elstain 1992 edits a collection of relevant essays.

i.e. to secure a just and lasting peace; (iv) war should only be engaged in if all peaceful remedies are exhausted -- it should be a last resort; (v) there should be a fair chance of success; and (vi) war should be a morally legitimate venture -- civilians should not be targeted, the consequences of war should not bring disproportionate evil upon the parties concerned or the international community.

Two principles became firmly embodied in the tradition: *Jus ad Bellum* and *Jus in Bello*. The former governed the conditions necessary for a State to wage war, whilst the latter concentrated on the conduct of war itself. It was right to go to war, *Jus ad Bellum*, if a ruler's judicial rights were violated by a neighbour and all available peaceful means (usually arbitration) had been exhausted before the initiation of force. War was permissible if the legal authority in the State could morally justify intent ('just cause') and aims ('right motive'). The initiators of war had to be sure that more good than evil would be brought about by their actions. Hostilities were only appropriate if there was a reasonable chance of success. A just war, however, could be rendered unjust if prosecuted by means that were intrinsically immoral. This second group of requirements, *Jus in Bello*, specified that the suffering and destruction caused in war must not be disproportionate to the cause justifying the resort to war. This latter specifies the principles of discrimination (or non-combatant immunity) and proportionality

in the conduct of war itself. Some wars were just and some unjust, some means were immoral and some permissible, the task of the Christian was to render judgement on actual situations. It was these issues of intentionality, discrimination, and proportionality that re-emerged to dominate the terms of the debate in the modern period.¹³⁶ Although an awareness of these aspects is important they have led, arguably, to less focus and/or emphasis on the main theoretical interest here -- the Augustinian position on the State, legitimate authority, individual and collective political responsibility.

Conclusion

This chapter has located Augustinian positions on the State, legitimate authority, and political responsibility as aspects within the *just war* tradition. Historically, these positions were fashioned to help determine the circumstances in which war could, or should, be legitimately waged by Christians. Theoretically, Augustine's distinctive emphasis helped effect the Church's first significant adoption of the presuppositions of political realism. Niebuhr affirms that "Augustine was, by general consent, the first great 'realist' in western history."¹³⁷

Augustine was largely responsible for the rejection of the anti-militarism, quasi-pacifism, and idealism of many of the

¹³⁶ For analysis on the development of these aspects of the just war see: Santoni 1991; Acton 1991; the review essay by Winters 1986; Bailey 1987; Kertesz 1989; Holmes 1989; Bainton 1960; Johnson 1981 and 1984.

¹³⁷ "Augustine's Political Realism" in Niebuhr 1953, p.115.

early Church's Fathers (e.g. Tertullian, Origen, Lactantius). In the process he undertook a fundamental re-analysis of the nature and function of a Christian in politics. Augustine's formulations were products of both his understanding of the inevitability of a close relationship between Church and State, and a pragmatic or realistic response to the requirements of statecraft. Those who endorse the Augustinian tradition believe it is the best understanding of human nature realistic enough to make good politics possible.¹³⁸

Augustinian realism suggests that existing societal arrangements are to be (albeit relatively) justified and worth saving. This distinction between individual (ethical) and collective (political) spheres leads to a conflation of social legitimacy with that of the State apparatus. For Niebuhr, however, this aspect was excessive because it could not differentiate between the degrees of injustice on which Christian judgements about 'this-world' political choices must invariably rest: "On the basis of his principles he could not distinguish between government and slavery, both of which were supposedly the rule over man by man and were both a consequence of, and remedy for, sin; nor could he distinguish between a commonwealth and a robber band, for both were bound together by collective interest;..."¹³⁹

Just war ideas, nevertheless, rest squarely on this particular understanding of political responsibility and the

¹³⁸ Lovin 1995, p.159.

¹³⁹ "Augustine's Political Realism" in Niebuhr 1953, p.121.

legitimacy of the State. In the first instance war is an area in which the sinfulness of humanity is most apparent. Christians ought to hate all war and desire peace but be resigned to the fact that real peace could not be achieved on earth. Because war and violence, like greed and injustice, was inevitable the Christian was morally obliged to try and affect the terms in which the debate over war was conducted. In the second instance the State apparatus is a legitimate authority with a God-given duty to safeguard the social good: it could resort to force if threatened. Niebuhr recognised that such realism was flawed precisely because it endeavoured to be so consistently realistic about issues of self-interest and power. Although this conceptualisation avoids the absolute sanctification of Government "its indiscriminate character", Niebuhr again notes, "is apparent by a failure to recognise the difference between legitimate and illegitimate, between ordinate and inordinate subordination of man to man."¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p.123.

SECTION II:
HISTORICAL PRECEDENTS

CHAPTER THREE:

ECUMENICALISM AND ITS CONSEQUENCES 1910-48

Introduction

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries evolutionary philosophy and idealist metaphysics combined in 'liberal-internationalism.'¹ Here eighteenth century rationalism and nineteenth century radicalism produced a broad ethical consensus that understood international relations, not in terms of the maximising of national interest, but as the establishment of a community of mutual tolerance, coupled with the resolution of conflict by peaceful, rational means. This was to be achieved by the creation and management of international organisations, and via the education of public opinion in loyalties wider than

¹ The literature available to delineate liberal idealism as a process, and transnational organisations as representative aspects of that process, is vast: e.g. essays in Booth and Smith (eds.) 1995; Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff 1990; Nardin and Mapel (eds.) 1992; Viotti and Kauppi 1987. In particular see, Michael Doyle "Liberalism and World Politics Revisited"; Mark Zacher and Richard Matthew "Liberal International Theory: Common Threads, Divergent Strands" (in Kegley [ed.] 1995, pp.83-106 and 107-72 respectively); and Scot Burchill "Liberal Internationalism" (in Burchill and Linklater 1996, pp.28-66). A dated yet nonetheless worthy summary of the problems, progress and theory of international organisation was provided by Claude 1966. For the impact of war on the liberal conscience see Howard 1977 and 1989a. A useful consideration and comparison of the role of the Roman Catholic Church as transnational actor is provided by Vallier 1971. Finally, Virginia Austin's 1991 PhD is also noteworthy because her transnationalist hypothesis used the Church of England as case-study.

narrow, state-centric patriotism. It was hoped, as Michael Howard reveals, that "Britain's own national affairs would be conducted in accordance with a Kantian imperative, to provide an example for other nations and to smooth the path towards the development of a higher national community based on the rule of law."² The intention was to replace an old-order based on national power, with a new one based on consent. The problem for Christianity, however, was that in these conceptions: "In place of the promise and providence of God as the ground for hope and the creative power of the future, the new philosophies of history substituted both human action and an immanent teleology [i.e. a secularised sense of Providence] within history."³ The European Protestant Churches faced with this pluralist challenge, set to conceptualise a programme that was complementary with, not in opposition to, liberalism and its consequences. The drive towards ecumenicalism, the process in which Christians of different denominations united, was a principal result of this normative shift in social reasoning. The intention in this chapter is to locate the subject-matter of this thesis by illustrating how the plan for a 'supranational Christian council' was principally a consequence of this optimistic epistemology that saw itself grasping the inevitable,

² Howard 1977, p.367.

³ Richard Bauckham "Challenge to Secular and Theological Presuppositions" in Bauckham and Elford (eds.) 1989, pp.31-32.

progressive direction of history. This is accomplished in two ways. First, by examining the driving forces and policy implications of international ecumenicalism. Secondly, by showing how these efforts resulted in the creation of the World Council of Churches and its constituent assembly, the British Council of Churches, during World War II.

Part I: Christians and Liberal-Internationalism

Professor Latourette has observed⁴ that the nineteenth century, measured in terms of geographical spread and influence, was Christianity's greatest. In spite of the intimate connection with the expansion of European, ostensibly Protestant Empires, there was less direction and active assistance from the State than in any era since Constantine adopted Christianity in the fourth century. The expansion was chiefly a result of voluntary organisations financially supported by private individuals. By the end of the century Christianity was truly global yet nonetheless still divided by doctrinal differences, political disputes, and exclusivity.⁵ For many Christians such fragmentation was

⁴ Latourette (Vol.IV) 1941, p.458.

⁵ There are a plethora of texts dealing with the growth and consequent fragmentation of Christianity. The most comprehensive and impressive being the seven volume set by Kenneth Scott Latourette *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*. Christianity in the European setting is dealt with admirably by McLeod 1981. The structure, organisation and sociology of Christianity is covered by the classic study by Troeltsch 1931. There are several books that seek to offer explanations for the particular divisions, and continued fragmentation of the British churches such as Gilley and Sheils (eds.) 1994; and Bruce 1995. Bruce is particularly useful in that he highlights both the corrosive effect

hard to justify in the light of prodigious missionary activity, and the growth of new Churches in Africa and Asia.⁶

Various transdenominational bodies began to form in the hope of fostering Christian reunion. Of particular importance was the creation of the Young Men's Christian Association (1844), the Evangelical Alliance (1846) promoting 'Scriptural Christianity', and the World Student Christian Federation⁷ (1892). These events were swiftly followed by the merger of international and inter-church groupings with a similar doctrinal basis. Here the Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops (1867) became the precursor to international associations such as The Alliance of Reformed Churches throughout the World holding the Presbyterian System (1875), the World Methodist Council (1881), and the Baptist World Alliance (1905).⁸ In 1888 Britain, the Society of Friends founded the Friends' Peace

of cultural pluralism, and the relaxation of State support as the main dynamics behind the evolution of different and distinct denominations. Alternatively Hastings 1987 (especially for the period 1920-59) is invaluable for thumb-nail sketches of the politics, theology and personalities involved in this thesis.

⁶ On missionary expansion see Renwick and Harman 1985, pp.174-81; Vidler 1988, pp.246-56; Worrall 1988, pp.183-202.

⁷ The forerunner of the Student Christian Movement and the influential theological press (SCM). By 1910 the SCM was seen as the "ecumenical think-tank of the Protestant Churches" (Kent 1992, p.15). Hastings (1987, pp.86-99) attests to the "quite extraordinary importance" of the SCM in the birth of ecumenicalism." Up to the 1950s the SCM enjoyed considerable influence in university circles and attracted a number of able clerics who went on to influential academic and administrative posts. The theologically liberal, and somewhat politically progressive, ethos of this organisation played a significant part in crystallising the thinking of many of the Church's leaders (Medhurst and Moyser 1982, p.177).

⁸ Renwick and Harman 1985, pp.205-6.

Committee⁹, and throughout the 1890s the main English and Welsh Nonconformist or 'Dissenting' Churches -- Baptist, Congregationalist, Presbyterian, and Methodist -- came together to create a National Council of Evangelical Free Churches.¹⁰ In 1900 the majority of the Free Church of Scotland united with the United Presbyterian Church to form the United Free Church of Scotland. Although these developments are ecclesiastically significant in their own terms it was not until the early half of the twentieth century that the ecumenical movement as it is known today began to take shape.

Influential scholars such as Kenneth Slack¹¹ argue that the birth of the modern ecumenical movement began with the World Missionary Conference of 1910.¹² One of the principal architects of this Edinburgh-held conference was the thinker, administrator and ecumenical strategist Dr. Joe

⁹ This organisation would put its considerable resources (money, publishing) at the disposal of all sections of the peace movement. Ceadel 1980, p.63.

¹⁰ For a concise overview of 'The English Free Churches' and developments in Scotland see Hastings 1987, pp.100-30, 262-72, 436-72; Vidler 1988, pp.134-45, 169-78; and Worrall 1988, pp.134-58.

¹¹ Kenneth Slack was General Secretary of the BCC 1955-65 and later Moderator of the United Reformed Church. For Slack's thesis see Slack 1960. Martin 1960 is sympathetic to Slack's analysis. Rouse and Neil (eds.) 1954, however, argue that the ecumenical movement has sixteenth century roots. The 'official' history of twentieth century ecumenicalism is contained in the two volumes by Fey 1970. Two other books of note are Hogg 1952; and Neill 1960 whose *Men of Unity* gives some idea of the patriarchal nature of the movement.

¹² Here I am primarily interested in developments in Britain. It is worth noting that the establishment of the first genuinely national Protestant council actually preceded the Edinburgh Conference by two years. In 1908 The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America was formed in the United States.

Oldham.¹³ The Archbishop of Canterbury (Davidson) attended the Conference and summed it up as "the most serious attempt which the Church has made to look steadily at the whole face of the non-Christian world, and to understand its meaning and challenge."¹⁴ From the success of this gathering developed the 1912 Conference of British Missionary Societies (CBMS), and from there the establishment of various National Christian Councils,¹⁵ and Councils of

¹³ Oldham (1874-1969) is the most important actor in this chapter and has been described as "undoubtedly the greatest pioneer of the twentieth century ecumenical movement" (van der Bent 1978, p.16). At this time Oldham was not only secretary of the Conference but secretary of the International Committee of the Young Men's Church Aid and of the World Student Christian Movement. He later became secretary to the Edinburgh Missionary Conference continuation committee, and then of the International Missionary Council before taking the vice-presidency of the newly formed BCC 1944-46. Hastings describes Oldham as the "spider at the heart of almost every non-Roman missionary web, the mind who could best interpret the future, the tactician who could handle...the Colonial Office, the international ecclesiastical statesman in comparison with whom almost every bishop appeared immeasurably provincial in outlook" and the figure "more responsible than anyone else for the development of ecumenical institutions and a Christian sense of social responsibility." Oldham was the Athenaeum Whig, accepting the principle of progress (at least within Britain), whilst quietly devising the new strategies, spotting and bringing together the 'people who really mattered. See Hastings 1987, pp.95, 264, 304 and 497.

¹⁴ This does not suggest the proceedings went completely smoothly. Whilst the Conference heralded increased co-operation certain Anglican Missionary societies and a number of small interdenominational ones were unsure as to whether they should have committed themselves to such a suggestive venture. See van der Bent 1978, p.16.

¹⁵ For example in 1916 a more official and representative Federal Council of the Evangelical Free Churches came into existence. Whilst this Council proved more adept at fostering relations with the Church of England than the existing National Free Church Council, it was not until 1939 that both Free Church organisations came together to form the present Free Church Federal Council. In 1929 the majority of the United Free Church of Scotland joined the Church of Scotland to bring together a large percentage of the Scottish population. Both unions left behind minorities, which formed the present Free Church of Scotland and the United Free Church of Scotland respectively. The three Methodist bodies that had united in 1907 as the United Methodist Church, joined with the Wesleyan and Primitive Methodists to form the present Methodist Church of Great Britain and Ireland in 1932. See Hastings 1987, pp.100-30, pp.262-72; Vidler 1988, pp.134-45 and 169-78; Worrall 1988, pp.134-58.

Christian Congregations.¹⁶ The most important consequence of the Edinburgh Conference, in terms of ecumenical developments, was the creation of the International Missionary Council and its subsequent Faith and Order Movement. It was this Faith and Order Movement that became the first major strand to constitute modern ecumenicalism.

The Faith and Order Movement

In 1920-21 Oldham helped create and organise the International Missionary Council (IMC).¹⁷ Oldham had two aims. First, he envisioned that the IMC would act as an organisation that would link together existing National Christian Councils. This aim was supported by the Church of England bishops in their 'Appeal to All Christian People.'¹⁸ Here the bishops urged that "all should unite in a new and great endeavour to recover and to manifest to the world the unity of the Body of Christ for which he prayed."¹⁹ Oldham's second aim was to "co-ordinate the activities of the national missionary organisations of the different countries and to unite Christian forces of the world in seeking justice in international and inter-racial

¹⁶ Bolton, Manchester, and St. Albans were the first. The object of the Bolton Council was: "To bring near the realisation of the kingdom of God by witnessing to and upholding in all its fullness the Christian ideal of faith and morals, both in the congregations and the community at large." Quote taken from Payne 1972, p.2.

¹⁷ The IMC managed to sustain this separate identity until it was merged with the World Council of Churches in 1961.

¹⁸ Sent out via the Lambeth Conference of 1920.

¹⁹ Payne 1972, p.3.

relations."²⁰ Bishop Charles Brent, an American Episcopalian who had attended the Edinburgh Conference, helped to further this last intention by proposing a series of world missionary assemblies. It was Brent's hope that a series of conferences on 'Faith and Order' would include representatives of "all Christian communions throughout the world which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour."²¹ The first World Conference on Faith and Order was held at Lausanne, Switzerland in 1927. Complementing this international, inter-denominational, and growing missionary co-operation, came two other 'prongs' that illustrate the ways in which Protestantism was endeavouring to perform a Promethean role in the world.

The second prong of ecumenicalism, parallel to the essentially ecclesiological developments of Faith and Order, came from peace activists. Three strands of opinion played a part: pacifist, international socialist, and liberal-internationalist.²² All strands regarded war as an unnecessary aberration from normal intercourse and believed that in a rational world, wars would not exist and could be abolished, as slavery was abolished, by a collective effort of the conscience of humanity. This impetus from both within and without the Churches to foster international

²⁰ Quote from van der Bent 1978, p.19.

²¹ Ibid., p.21.

²² A detailed analysis of these separate but historically intertwined elements is provided by Myers' 1965 PhD, pp.1-36. Also see Beales 1931; Ceadel 1980; Hinton 1989; Taylor and Young 1987.

friendship, involved not only accepting that Christian thinking had failed to bring peace but arguing that it was still a force, despite secularisation, that could have public effect. The principal focus for this developing ethic of universal fellowship, nonetheless, was the absolutist pacifists with their belief in the rejection of war as an instrument of policy. Articulated in Pelagian terms as the imitation of Christ as highest moral example, of war as an anachronism in human evolution, or of the aspiration for "One World" beyond the evil of national attachments, Christian pacifism typically looked to the force of love and moral suasion as the essence of its alternative political programme.²³

Concern over the increased competition in naval armaments in the years leading up to the Great War led many of these peace campaigners, both British and German, to form a World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches.²⁴ This organisation held a series of meetings supported by a mixture of Quakers²⁵, pacifists, socialists, anarchists, and concerned liberals including the American industrialist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie²⁶. Despite

²³ Epp's 1990 PhD, p.69.

²⁴ Payne 1972, p.2. Strangely the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches is ignored by reputable texts, including Ceadel 1980.

²⁵ In 1913 the Quakers extended their influence particularly in the north of England when they established the Northern Friends Peace Board.

²⁶ The steel baron Andrew Carnegie had a social conscience that was very weak in dealing with the 'sins' of capitalism but made him a great financial supporter of libraries and schools. He gave money to official

the outbreak of war in 1914 the British section of the World Alliance was sufficiently established to withstand an inevitable hostility to its aims.²⁷ Also in 1914 the Cambridge based, but globally focused, Fellowship of Reconciliation (FoR) was founded to bring together Christian pacifists of the world into one organisation. This body was particularly successful in drawing British Nonconformists and Quakers together.²⁸ Support for such cosmopolitan initiatives increased after 1918 when many radicals concluded that the national Churches had damaged *just war* credibility by supporting the Great War.²⁹ The success of these independent attempts to join together members of disparate denominations with an interest in avoiding war encouraged many more Christian peace activists, pacifist and pacific-ist alike, to become active in ecumenical affairs.

The Life and Work Movement

The third complementary prong of ecumenicalism was completed when Nathan Söderblom, Archbishop of Uppsala in

policy-orientated peace agencies particularly the Church Peace Union (later the Council on Religion and International Affairs) and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Theodore Olson's 1962 PhD (p.10) reveals that although neither of these organisations were government sponsored they maintained close relations with the US Administration. Thomas (1971, p.305) notes that the actual service to peace of these institutions has been very moderate.

²⁷ R. E. Burlingham was secretary of the British Committee from 1925. In 1946-47 he was acting General Secretary of the BCC.

²⁸ See Ceadel 1980 for detail. A prominent early member of the FoR was the Congregationalist minister Cecil J. Cadoux, later Professor of Church History at Oxford, and author of influential books see Cadoux 1919 and 1940.

²⁹ Kent 1992, p.99.

Sweden, drew attention to the wider political potentiality of a united project. The Archbishop proposed an inter-Church conference to promote the application of Christian ethics to international relations, social and economic life.³⁰ There had been various antecedents for this idea, particularly the nineteenth-century Christian Socialists³¹ and the American Social Gospel movement³². An important element of the first Universal Christian Conference on 'Life and Work' held at Stockholm in 1925 was the call to give the League of Nations a 'Christian Soul' and thus make it an associated instrument of a Christian political movement.³³ This invocation of a 'Christian West' was intended to: first, bring security to Europe by reawakening

³⁰ Out of this Stockholm conference came the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work with its slogan "Service unites, doctrine divides". See van der Bent 1978, pp.21-2.

³¹ Rowan Williams reveals the name to be deeply misleading. Although Christian Socialists reacted strongly against the worst excesses of nineteenth century *laissez-faire* capitalism and supported co-operative labour and workers' associations of a trade union kind, its leaders like F. D. Maurice and J. M. Ludlow, were basically conservative monarchists with a markedly hierarchical indeed State-centred view of society (Williams in Nicholls and Williams 1984, p.18). An observation that surely justifies Marx's dismissal: "Christian Socialism is but the holy water with which the priest consecrates the heart-burnings of the aristocrat." See Section III of *The Communist Manifesto* in McLellan (ed.) 1977, p.239.

³² At the beginning of the twentieth century Social Gospel preachers were confident that a new era of social Christianity was about to begin, transforming the raw reality of industrialism and ushering in an era of international peace. Here Walter Rauschenbusch's manifesto *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (1907) presupposed that progressive politics reflected Christ's ethical values and rallied liberal Protestants to the task of "Christianising the social order". Augustinian realism argues that the ethics of Jesus cannot provide meaningful social ethics.

³³ Kent 1992, pp.97 and 5. It was Oldham who in fact pointed out to Randall Davidson (Archbishop of Canterbury) that there was no reference to freedom of conscience or religion in the League's covenant. Randall subsequently wrote to Lord Robert Cecil (Britain's League representative) in Paris to insure it was inserted 'in the nick of time' in Article 22 on the Mandated Territories. See Hastings 1987, p.95.

Christianity's pre-Constantine essence as peace-maker; and second, radiate out to the whole world and transform social life in one dynamic and peaceful 'Kingdom of God'.³⁴ Söderblom henceforth called upon the Churches to widen the social area to which a 'Christian' meaning could be given. Yet this intention made little sense if the Churches had no equivalent of the League through which to apply its spiritual pressure. By creating a socio-religious movement that united all Churches, a Christian liberal-internationalism could react to a rapidly changing post-war situation by furthering peaceful coexistence. Europe, therefore, could be reconciled in a single Christianity and rediscover its former central position in the world as far as politics, culture and faith were concerned. Out of these discussions emerged George Bell, a well-known social activist, committed to the programme.³⁵ Bell's inclusion was particularly invaluable because he was both highly energetic, motivated and hence described by Söderblom as the

³⁴ An approach detailed by Howard 1989a in his study of "War and the Liberal Conscience". Also see Eberhard Jüngel's essay "The Gospel and the Protestant Churches of Europe: Christian Responsibility from a Protestant Perspective" 1993, pp.137-50.

³⁵ Hastings characterises Bell (Hastings 1987, p.374) as the "obstinate little priest who was quite determined that the Church should not sink in war to being the State's spiritual auxiliary." The indomitable Bell (1883-1958) figures largely in this thesis as a prophetic voice opposed to just war thinking and a figure well used to standing in marked contrast to the largely silent and inactive Church leadership of his day. In 1925 he was the Anglican Dean of Canterbury, and later a particularly vocal Bishop of Chichester (1929) until his death in 1958. Bell became the prime 'peace activist' (but not pacifist) voice on both the Commissions that led to the 1946 BCC report *The Era of Atomic Power* and the 1959 report *Christians and Atomic War*.

"bell that never rang for nothing"³⁶. Bell became the new President of Life and Work.

The British preparations for the Stockholm Life and Work conference included a large and important Conference on Politics, Economics and Citizenship (COPEC) held in Birmingham. From the 5 to 12 April 1924 William Temple³⁷ (then Bishop of Manchester) chaired the conference supported by the secretarial skills of Canon Charles Raven³⁸. Temple saw the Conference as an opportunity to galvanise a wilfully lethargic Church and guide it towards the form of common social action that would serve as the foundation for a global Christian pressure-group. Like Söderblom and most other Christian leaders of the time, Temple assumed that the Church should be the spiritual and political motor of human

³⁶ Quoted by Carey 1995, p.434.

³⁷ William Temple (1881-1944), like Oldham, was a ceaseless worker for Protestant internationalism. He had attended the Edinburgh Conference as a spokesperson for the SCM and believed that unity would bring the Churches a greater voice in international affairs. Eventual first official leader of the World Council of Churches, Archbishop of Canterbury (1942-44) and passionate advocate of Christians working on the side of greater social equality and hence a 'peace activist'. John Elford (1985, p.176-77) attests that it was Temple who "vigorously urged the Churches to enter spheres of social, political and economic thought where, previously, religion had been regarded as a trespasser....(he) had the effect of preparing both the Churches and the political establishment for a much closer Christian engagement with political and military issues than had often previously been the case." Kent's 1992 biography is very good in detailing the social activity of 'The People's Archbishop'. For Temple the British State was constant, but not identical, with his vision of 'Christendom' (Suggate 1981). Hastings concludes (1987, p.253) that it would be entirely naive to point to the moderately radical opinions of either Temple or indeed Bell, as proof that the Church of England had then a left-wing rather than right-wing slant.

³⁸ Charles E. Raven, Anglican priest, Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge (later vice-chancellor) and 'Christian Communist' become particularly active in peace activist circles (especially the Fellowship of Reconciliation) after his conversion to pacifism in 1930. He authored several influential books (e.g. Raven 1938 and Raven 1951) and was well-known for his attacks on Augustinian-style realism.

history, and that no real kind of lasting progress was sustainable without it.³⁹ Because of this Temple believed that the COPEC movement should proceed from primary Gospel principles to secondary principles in order to offer effective guidance over the whole of contemporary life.⁴⁰ This meant that the Christian Gospel would not lay down rules, but rather that the Church would indicate what was expected of secular legislators. Temple's hopes of building a forward-thinking coalition were, however, thwarted and resulting reports far from novel.

Alec Vidler, the radical theologian who in 1957 would turn down an opportunity to serve on the British Council of Churches' Study Group on the moral aspects of nuclear deterrence, reported that "seldom was a satisfactory balance struck between idealism and realism. There was an awful amount of amateurishness and lack of expertise."⁴¹ This amateurishness was particularly apparent in the publication *Christianity and War* with its implied ambivalence to the use of just war thinking to sanctify the prosecution of the Great War. On one hand the report suggested that: "the mode of conducting war since 1914, and much of the sentiment

³⁹ Kent 1992, p.148.

⁴⁰ The title of the published documents are testimony to the breadth of subjects covered: *The Nature of God and his Purpose for the World, Education, The Home, The Relation of the Sexes, Leisure, The Treatment of Crime, International Relations, Christianity and War, Industry and Property, Politics and Citizenship, The Social Function of the Church, and Historical Illustrations of the Social Effects of Christianity*. For analysis of the Conference see Kent 1992, pp.115-34.

⁴¹ Hastings 1987 p.179.

shown since the peace, derive far more obviously from the Old Testament, even from the standards of our pagan forefathers, than from the Gospel of Christ" yet on the other hand felt able to declare, "all war is contrary to the spirit and teaching of Jesus Christ, and that therefore in time of war more than ever the Church of Christ must witness and labour for the Christian way of life against hatred and cruelty."⁴² Such confusion has led other commentators to conclude that the Conference as a whole showed how little thought had really gone into the relationship between individual conscience and political authority, and how many broad questions endured untaxed by critical questions.⁴³ Despite Temple's impassioned call for a united front the memories of war seemed to painfully problematic for further discussion by many in the British Churches, particularly the Church of England.⁴⁴ It was not until 1928, ten years after Armistice, that the Churches felt confident to challenge ideas about war once more.

The Christ and Peace Campaign

Beginning in October 1929 the 'Christ and Peace Campaign' was launched to awaken the Churches to the importance of

⁴² My italics. COPEC Commission Report: *Christianity and War* (Vol. VIII) 1924, p.23. Both Ormrod 1987 p.191; and Ceadel 1980, p.67, refer to *Christianity and War*.

⁴³ Chandler 1995, p.84.

⁴⁴ Charles E. Raven would later argue, perhaps by way of justification: "No man who has offered his life for a cause and is still bearing the psychic and physical evidence paid, can, while the wounds are still fresh, discuss whether his offering was a mistake". Raven 1938, p.44.

condemning modern warfare and ultimately question the State's propensity to resort to violence in pursuit of its foreign policy objectives. This Campaign held twenty-five meetings and conferences between October 1929 and April 1931. Its major success was the declaration (at its 1930 Lambeth Conference) that "war as a method of settling international disputes is incompatible with the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ."⁴⁵ Whilst, as Ceadel argues⁴⁶, Anglican clergy took as active a role as their Nonconformist colleagues, lack of clear organisation and the failure to distinguish between condemning war and preaching outright hostility to any war dented the Campaign's impact. In spite of such interdenominational attempts there was still no clear formula to guide Christian attitudes to war.⁴⁷ Attitudes remained polarised, yet pacifists were forcing the pace of debate.

In 1929 the Church of Scotland Peace Society was revived and the Fellowship of Reconciliation quietly increased its membership. Pacifist movements within the Congregationalist and Methodist communities soon emerged, swiftly followed in 1933 by the formation of a Council of Christian Pacifist

⁴⁵ Ormrod 1987, p.191.

⁴⁶ Ceadel 1980, p.68.

⁴⁷ Norman 1976, p.298 argues that the 'Christ and Peace Campaign' was no serious advance on the earlier COPEC approach. As a guide to Christian duty on the question of war-prevention both were 'ambiguous formulas'.

Groups to co-ordinate denominational efforts.⁴⁸ In May 1936 the Anglican Canon, Dick Shepard, together with his Peace Pledge Union (PPU) gave birth to the New Pacifist Movement in an attempt to combine the pacifist and pacific-ist traditions.⁴⁹ It was not until 1937, however, that the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship (i.e. an official voice from the Established Church) was heard. Nevertheless, Church interest in peace issues, particularly pacifism, was stimulated by such organisation even if the unresolved tensions between *just war* and pacific-ism remained.

By the mid-1930s all of these organisations and activities had succeeded in introducing local and national Church leaders to one another. Vital networks of personal links had been forged and growing co-operation now transcended geographic borders. On Bishop Brent's death in 1929 William Temple, the new Archbishop of York, took over Brent's role as Chair of the Edinburgh Continuation Committee on Faith and Order. In 1934 Oldham resigned from his position as secretary to the IMC to become Chair of the Research Committee of the Life and Work movement, and in practice holder of "the most strategic position in the

⁴⁸ The founder members of this Council included not only the Methodists and Congregationalists, but also the Quakers, the Unitarians, and the FoR. Ceadel 1980, p.174.

⁴⁹ In 1939 the PPU would secure 136,000 signatures to their declaration "I renounce war and will never sanction another". Taylor and Pritchard (1980, p.16) argue that by the 1950s the PPU had come to represent the individualistic and rather 'conservative' wing of the Pacifist movement. For more information see Morrison 1962; Collins 1966; Ceadel 1980; and Ormrod 1987.

ecumenical movement as a whole".⁵⁰ Around William Temple 'the pope *in petto*'⁵¹ a small group of committed religious professionals had risen whose theoretical centre was no longer the restricted ethos of national Churches. Temple, Oldham, and Bell were now the heart of a small, efficient and growing international spiritual and political bureaucracy.⁵² The many different and diffuse strands involved in the ecumenical project were slowly beginning to bind together.

Service Unites, Doctrine Divides

In 1937 the Archbishop of Canterbury (Lang), supported by Free Church leaders, urged a 'Recall to Religion'. One of the consequences of this was, later that year, a Life and Work conference held in Oxford, with a Faith and Order conference organised for Edinburgh. The slogan "Service Unites, Doctrine Divides" was adopted to inspire delegates and avoid too much discussion of a doctrinal nature.⁵³ Oldham undertook the main secretarial work for the Oxford (Life and Work) conference with a programme geared to understanding the relationship between religious and political responsibility.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Hastings 1987, p.303.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² See Kent 1992, pp.95-114 for detail.

⁵³ Van der Bent 1978, 22.

⁵⁴ This conference was called 'Church, Community and State' and was particularly concerned with defining the relationship of Church to State. Discussions fill eight thick volumes and in van der Bent's words (1978, p.19-22) "remains to this day the most comprehensive ecumenical

The Oxford Conference on 'Church, Community and State' was undoubtedly the central ecumenical event of the 1930s. Here the three Christian attitudes to war and peace: unconditional obedience to the State, *just war* theory, and pacifism, that have formed the basis for subsequent ecumenical statements were stated for the first time in official form.⁵⁵ What the Church should do, Oldham and others concluded, was refrain from normative discussions of the 'rightness' or 'wrongness' of particular State policy (i.e. the means with which that policy would be implemented) and confine itself to a rather more generalised discussion that could express the Church's opinion on the ends sought by policy. Even though such statements were considered, in terms of Christian social ethics, 'middle axioms'⁵⁶ they nevertheless suggest the same logic and instrumentalism that is associated with political realism. This is particularly so because it seems that means and ends were separated for

statement on problems of church and society and Christian social responsibility". Contributors included Sir Alfred Zimmern, the incumbent of the first Chair in IR recently established Chair at University College Aberystwyth, the American politician John Foster Dulles, the High Anglican Christian Socialist R. H. Tawney and many of the most distinguished theologians of the day. The report of the Conference has been reprinted as the volume *Foundations of Ecumenical Social Thought*: Oldham [ed.] 1966.

⁵⁵ Oldham (ed.) 1966, pp.118-23. Hastings 1987, p.304; and Dyson in Bauckham and Elford (eds.) 1989, p.104.

⁵⁶ Elford 1985, p.193. Dyson notes (in Bauckham and Elford [eds.] 1989, p.108) that liberation theologians take particular exception to this approach to Christian social ethics because it suggests that if the Christian way of life cannot be concretely embodied in personal life and social structure with a very high degree of specificity, then it lays itself open to the Enlightenment/Marxist/Nietzschean charge that Christianity distracts attention from, and weakens commitment to, the characteristically human responsibilities in this world.

tactical reasons -- in order for the Church to express its political witness more clearly.

Sensitive to the implications behind these discussions the British branch of the World Alliance for International Friendship lobbied for a more representative body to prosecute common political concerns. It soon became clear that it would be more practicable if such efforts were co-ordinated with the Faith and Order movement.

In Edinburgh delegates (including William Temple and Reinhold Niebuhr⁵⁷) were faced with a problem. On one hand the Faith and Order movement could be transformed into a federation of independent Churches based on doctrinal compromise, yet separate from the Life and Work movement. Alternatively Faith and Order could play a part in something more innovative and far-reaching. Professor Adrian Hastings summarised the Churches' dilemma thus:

The ecumenical movement had grown with the League of Nations and must have seemed at times in the comfortable twenties but a pale religious reflection of the League's secular aspirations. But now the League was breaking down, its aspirations scorned. Faced with the challenge of Nazism and stiffened by the revival of a more conservative theology the churches of the thirties saw themselves as the Church over against the world...The ecumenical movement and its earlier international organisations long claimed to be in no way a replacement for existing churches. In a profound

⁵⁷ Here Temple, then Archbishop of York, greeted Reinhold Niebuhr with the words: "At last I've met the troubler of my peace" (Scott 1963, pp.29-30). A sentiment doubtlessly shared by many of Christendom's idealists. Temple, it should be noted, moved in basic position from a relatively Hegelian idealism to a relatively Augustinian (i.e. Niebuhrian) outlook (c.f. Preston 1981) in his later years. A useful comparison of the political theologies of Temple and Niebuhr is presented by Suggate 1981.

way, however, in the thirties the movement felt called to make of itself a unified body precisely so as to fulfil the first duty of the Church and witness in faith and with independence to the world of sin, modern ideology, and secular tyranny when the [independent national] Churches could, or would, not do it.⁵⁸

Although Archbishop Temple's biographer, John Kent⁵⁹, criticises Professor Hastings' exaggeration of the importance of the Churches' protests against "modern ideology and secular tyranny", he might well have drawn attention to the fact that what could have been a plan for radical change and social transformation, in practice resembled an attempt to sustain existing power structures in a sure 'Wilsonian' fashion. Although the likes of Temple and Oldham can be credited with ensuring that the shift in thinking away from the individualism and imperialism of the nineteenth century had not produced a sharp schism with Christianity,⁶⁰ a major obstacle was the fact that the Great War had collapsed faith in progress and international relations, concurrently encouraging the revival of a more conservative theology and Christian political activity which sought to extend the power of the State.⁶¹ This situation had driven many previously liberal-internationalists away from thoughts of federation towards a more chauvinistic

⁵⁸ Hastings 1987, p.305.

⁵⁹ Kent 1992, p.31.

⁶⁰ See Hastings 1987, particularly pp.172-85.

⁶¹ For detailed analysis on the demise of idealism and the reassertion of Augustinian realism see Epp's 1990 PhD. Also see Smith's "The Idealist Provocateurs" (1986, pp.54-67) for a summary of the main outlines of 1920s-40s idealism that serves to locate the realist reaction of the 1950s.

state-centred realism. To people like Oldham and Temple what mattered above all was that Christianity defended itself against the encroachment of the great secular excesses that were Fascism, Nazism, and Stalinism.⁶² In this limited way many conservatives were indeed justified in thinking that Faith and Order, a rather cautious body, was being hijacked by the more ambitious but pragmatically minded leadership of Life and Work.⁶³ Yet even the leadership of Life and Work offered, in Hegelian fashion, support for the ideal State that would counter secular tyranny and disseminate a Western Christian world-view. At no time was Faith and Order seen as an acceptable alternative to the State-centred model of Christendom. Temple, for example, was a impassioned believer in the concept of State sovereignty (as represented by the League) and opposed those 'cosmopolitans' who sought a world-wide federal system that would limit the sovereignty of member Churches.

After heated debate it was decided to bring the two streams of Faith and Order and Life and Work together. The logistics of such an ambitious transnational venture required equivalent national and international structures along similar lines to the IMC. The idea of a World Council

⁶² Kent 1992, p.55.

⁶³ Kent 1992, p.306.

of Churches linked to some form of national counterpart was consequently born.⁶⁴

Part II: The Formation of the WCC and the BCC

Once it had been decided to bring the Life and Work and Faith and Order movements together, a provisional committee, chaired by Temple, was convened at Utrecht in the Netherlands during the Spring of 1938 to establish a draft constitution. In the very year the League of Nations Assembly held its last session, the Dutch theologian Dr. Visser't Hooft became the first General Secretary of a World Council of Churches (WCC) 'In Process of Formation'.⁶⁵ Because of the outbreak of war, however, the formal inauguration of the WCC was delayed until its first official meeting at Amsterdam, August 22 to September 4 1948.

In these early years the Geneva based WCC was consolidated and designed as "a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour."⁶⁶ Membership was open to any Church who could accept this ethos. In practice this meant an original membership of 146 Churches from 44 countries including Anglicans, Baptists, Congregationalists, Calvinists and Lutherans, Methodists,

⁶⁴ Payne 1972, p.4.

⁶⁵ Hastings points out (Hastings 1987, p.306) that the Geneva-based 't Hooft theoretically shared the organisation of the World Council with William Paton, the new London-based secretary of the IMC, due to the outbreak of war however, 't Hooft soon acted in practice as sole secretary.

⁶⁶ Official quote, source not specified. Taken from van der Bent 1978, p.35.

Mennonites, Quakers, Moravians, Disciples, Old Catholics, the Salvation Army and a number of the Orthodox Churches. The majority of Protestant Churches in Europe, North America, and Australia joined but the Roman Catholics and most of the Orthodox community abstained.⁶⁷ Inevitably, the organisation was dominated by white, Western males who conceptualised the values of the modern Western State mostly in positive terms, as a kind of secular off-spring to Christianity. The Council, nevertheless, did not see itself as an universal authority controlling Christian thought, belief or practice. Temple as the Council's first official leader, in particular, did not intend the WCC as a 'super-church' or an alternative Vatican but as an organisation providing the non-Roman Catholic Churches with a way of transcending national limitations and playing a creative role on the world stage.⁶⁸ It was hoped that by ensuring the WCC acted outside direct Church control it would serve as the political equivalent to the Victorian Missionary Societies. The Council saw itself as an authoritative international source that would help guide national member Churches on problems of State, society, and Christian responsibility. On these terms the WCC saw itself as the moral custodian of the State, pointing society towards God, whilst helping Protestantism reinvent itself as a form of

⁶⁷ See Latourette (Vol.VII) 1946 for detail.

⁶⁸ Kent 1992, p.6.

politico-ideological pressure that could help mould the form of liberal society.

Statements and policies would be determined by representatives from national Churches meeting in Assembly, normally every seven years. More detailed decisions would be taken by the 150 members who made up the Central Committee (elected by the Assembly and meeting annually) and a smaller Executive Committee (22 members appointed by the Central Committee meeting twice a year). The General Secretary would serve to implement and co-ordinate such efforts and give leadership to the World Council as a whole.⁶⁹ At Amsterdam Bishop Bell was elected as the first chair of the Central Committee, the Council's most important office (other than that of General Secretary).

At the end of the second world war the WCC, before it was formally inaugurated, set up a specialised sub-unit on international affairs. This Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) began as a free-wheeling, largely independent outfit run by the diplomat Kenneth Grubb in London and the activist Fred Nolde in New York.⁷⁰ Kenneth Slack has argued that it was only with the formation of this Commission that: "the Churches of the world other than Roman Catholic [have] had a body possessed of the

⁶⁹ "The Way it Works" by van der Bent 1978, pp.34-46.

⁷⁰ There is a wealth of material on the setting up, and consequent activities of, the CCIA in BCC/CCIA Box 1.

necessary expertise to study large international issues and...[the ability] to formulate Christian judgement upon them."⁷¹ The CCIA was intended to serve as a political instrument for "calling the Churches' attention to the causes of particular conflicts, to the violation of human rights in particular places and to the evils of militarism, and by being available to represent the Churches' concern in areas of tension, it stimulates Christians to work for the healing of the nations, through peace and reconciliation."⁷² The CCIA's officers would henceforth serve to ensure that the voice of the WCC was heard by those charged with making decisions of an international political nature.⁷³

From the start the life of the WCC was fraught with controversy. Out of the WCC's first assembly came a four-volume compendium of essays *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, whose temper belied the Council's progressivist theological and social heritage. Many saw the intellectual climate of the time as indicative of a "un-Christian" or "post-Christian" world in crisis. The axes of dispute lay between those who (following Niebuhr) prodded the WCC to take side on the West's relative justice *vis-à-vis* Communism, and those (following Barth) who sought a neutralism.⁷⁴ As the

⁷¹ Slack 1960, p.38.

⁷² van der Bent 1978, p.39.

⁷³ For a evaluation of the methods and effectiveness of the WCC and CCIA as non-governmental organisation see Hudson 1977.

⁷⁴ See Epp's 1990 PhD for an excellent discussion of the intellectual currents and debates fostered at this time.

Cold War was enjoined many idealists and leftists began to see the WCC as a propaganda design against an atheist Soviet Union. The American secretary of state John Foster Dulles, for instance, intimated as much at Amsterdam. The Soviets thought so which encouraged the Eastern European Churches to agree. Evangelicals, however, disagreed and hence formed a militant rival, the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC) with Dr. Carl McIntire, an American Presbyterian minister as its main driving force. This organisation was marked by strong doctrinal convictions, and an opposition to both ecumenism and communism.⁷⁵

The British Council of Churches

In Britain, the success of the 1937 Oxford Conference had inspired Joe Oldham to form a British Advisory Committee to pursue relevant avenues of a political-theological nature. After the conference this committee developed in 1938 into a interdenominational Council on the Christian Faith and the Common Life. In July 1939 a chaplain from Glasgow University, Archibald C. Craig⁷⁶, established "A Commission of the Churches for International Friendship and Social Responsibility." Despite the pressures of war, these organisations helped keep the spirit of ecumenical unity alive and by 1942 plans for a British Council of Churches

⁷⁵ Renwick and Harman, 1985, p.229.

⁷⁶ Craig would eventually be the General Secretary of the BCC 1942 through 1946. Appendix to Payne 1972.

were well advanced. Ecumenical plans were further encouraged by the enthronement in April 1942 of William Temple as Archbishop of Canterbury. Temple's sermon enthused about "the great new fact of our era...(a) Christian fellowship which...extends into almost every nation."⁷⁷ Within weeks the British Council of Churches would be formally constituted.

At the inauguration of the BCC and before its first meetings were held on the 23rd and 24th September 1942,⁷⁸ Archbishop Temple summed up the aims of the BCC from the pulpit of St. Paul's Cathedral:

To-day we inaugurate the British Council of Churches, the counterpart in our country of the World Council, combining in a single organisation the chief agencies of the interdenominational co-operation which has marked the last five years....These departmental agencies...could never catch the public imagination. The newly-formed British Council of Churches may very likely do this, and so become the channel of new influences upon our common life. Our differences remain: we shall not pretend that they are already resolved into unity or harmony. But we take our stand in the common faith of Christendom, faith in God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier; and so standing together we invite men to share that faith and call on all to conform their lives to the principles derived from it.⁷⁹

The First Article of the BCC Constitution stated that "the British Council of Churches is a fellowship of Churches"⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Recalled by Payne 1972, p.6.

⁷⁸ Articles of Amalgamation, BCC Constitution, aims and basis, Standing Orders, Policy Documents, Annual Reports, and Minutes of the first meetings in BCC/1/6. The only attempt at a history of the BCC (from an ecclesiastical perspective) is Payne 1972.

⁷⁹ Quoted by Payne 1972, p.7.

⁸⁰ These Churches are situated in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland.

which confess the Lord Jesus as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the Glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit."⁸¹ Invitations to join were sent out to all those Churches which had collaborated in the earlier agencies. A total of sixteen denominations joined the BCC in 1942 including all the major Anglican, Baptist, Congregationalist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Quaker, Unitarian and Free Christian Churches of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. Several interdenominational bodies including the SCM, the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association), and YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) also joined. Article VI of the BCC Constitution defined the objectives of the Council as "the advancement of the Christian religion, the relief of poverty and the advancement of education and any other purposes which are charitable according to the law of England and Wales."⁸² The Council aimed to provide the means of consultation between the Churches, and serve as an instrument of common action by the Churches in questions of 'faith and order.'⁸³ From the start the Council aimed to do this by fostering links with Government departments (especially the Foreign and Colonial Offices) and with both national and

⁸¹ *Constitution and Rules* n.d., p.3.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p.4.

⁸³ This phrase is actually used. See Article VI of *BCC Constitution and Rules* n.d., p.5.

international organisations, statutory and voluntary, such as the United Nations Association. The BCC served as the focus for the pooling of limited resources whilst being an expression of British Churches who found it expedient not to 'go it alone', but were still not entirely united organisationally. It is no surprise that the basic structure of the BCC was similar to that of the WCC. Whilst the BCC was not a branch office or committed to every decision and action of the WCC, it was of the same 'ecumenical family' and did share common interests. The WCC in turn granted to the BCC the status of 'an associated national Council'. This organic relationship did much to stimulate BCC participation in the concerns and work of the World Council.⁸⁴ Yet the BCC was financially autonomous of the WCC and controlled its resources independently. Each member body maintained the BCC's work through annual grants proportionate to their size and financial capacity.⁸⁵

A 'General Assembly' (also known simply as 'the Council') was formed to serve as the principal source of authority for the British Council of Churches. It was decided that the BCC would best discharge its broadly defined remit if member Churches appointed representatives to serve in this Assembly. This would meet every six months for sessions normally lasting a weekend. Public statements, resolutions,

⁸⁴ See Slack 1960 p.38.

⁸⁵ Article IX, *Constitution and Rules* n.d., p.7.

and policies (including the commissioning of reports) would be determined by this Assembly.⁸⁶ The Assembly in turn appointed an 'Executive Committee' to meet at least six times a year in order to supervise Council work between Assembly meetings. The Executive was chaired by a General Secretary (Archibald Craig became the first secretary). Other Council officers included a President (normally the Archbishop of Canterbury), two vice-presidents⁸⁷, and a Treasurer. This central secretariat was supported by Departments (each chaired by a Secretary with their own staff) providing information, advice and practical support to members, and to other organisations that requested help whether local, national or international. The BCC began in time to develop a distinctive life of its own and its debates, resolutions and reports reflected a wider spread of Christian insight and commitment than could be found in any single Church.

International Affairs

The two main issues that brought together the BCC were international relations and social questions. It was accepted that 'theology' could not ignore the 'social' and that the responsibilities of the British Churches should not be limited to Britain. Two specialised departments were

⁸⁶ There was also a proviso for Private Members' Motions to be voted on in Assembly. See *Constitution and Rules* n.d., p.20.

⁸⁷ Oldham was voted as vice-president for the years 1944 to 1946.

thereby set up within the BCC to deal exclusively with these issues. The department that dealt with international relations was at first known as the Department for International Friendship, which was the lineal descendent of Burlingham's British section of the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches. In 1947 the Department of International Friendship came officially to be called the 'International Department' and later the Division of International Affairs (DIA).⁸⁸ In 1952 the Council of British Missionary Societies (CBMS) entered into formal association with the BCC, and from this point the DIA acted as a joint department for both Council and Conference.

There were no hard and fast rules determining the range of the International Department's activities. Essentially, the DIA was concerned with the "relationship between nations as political entities. This (was) not meant as a precise definition, but as a guide post."⁸⁹ A considerable amount of the Department's work was spent in formulating and expressing, on behalf of the BCC, a politico-moral judgement on areas of international political concern where they thought they had a duty to express such judgement such as de-colonisation and war. In the formulation of such judgements the Department used the specialised knowledge and

⁸⁸ Payne 1972, p.8.

⁸⁹ See 'Confidential Working Paper on Future of the International Department', dated January 1963, in BCC/CBMS International Department Box 15.

expertise of individuals, advisory, support, specialist, and *ad hoc* groups, not necessarily directly associated with the BCC such as the UN Association. Once the Department's judgement was determined it needed to express its considered opinion to different constituencies. A main constituency the BCC wanted to reach was the British Government. Here the DIA saw itself as a pressure group speaking on behalf of a section of British Christian society (i.e. particularly the BCC and its members). At the autumn 1944 Council meeting Oldham had spoken of the need for the BCC to safeguard its character as a Council of Churches. He argued:

At all costs the Council must preserve its church character and not seek to exercise the greater freedom which belongs to a private body. This means that the responsible church leaders who are members of the Council have no right to support any course of action which they are not prepared to commend and defend within their own several Churches.⁹⁰

It was, nevertheless, envisaged that such a joint approach would be both more informed and effective than views expressed by individual Churches. The Department aimed to keep regular Governmental department contacts and to secure 'top level' deputations to help in the formulation of their ideas. It aimed to ensure that they understood Government policies and that Government was made aware of the views of the Churches on major issues. The DIA also wanted to reach

⁹⁰ Oldham in Payne 1972, p.9.

individual British Churches and their members with the intention of articulating an informal voice on international affairs among British Christians. The Department did this with several 'executive actions'.

First, it issued reports and statements of general policy to the BCC Assembly. The basis of this was the 'Seven Point Policy for Joint Action by the British Churches'⁹¹. This formulation charged the Department to work for: (i) the strengthening of communication with the Churches of Eastern Europe and East Asia; (ii) European unity, with a recognition of Britain's common spiritual inheritance with the peoples of the Continent; (iii) supporting the United Nations; (iv) persistence in negotiation with the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China; (v) opposition to racial discrimination; (vi) increased overseas service in terms of both personnel and money; and (vii) assistance to under-developed peoples. Next, the DIA created 'working parties' that would publish well-researched papers, reports, and reviews on major international developments in order to "help others understand the complex factors at work."⁹² (It was this working-party method that was mainly used in influencing public opinion on nuclear matters.⁹³) Thirdly,

⁹¹ Adopted by the BCC in April 1951. In 1960 this plan was replaced by a four-point statement of action called "A Pattern of International Action". See BCC/DIA/1/1/4.

⁹² *The British Council of Churches and International Affairs* n.d., p.2.

⁹³ A useful consideration of the various motives, styles and intended audience for Christian documentary engagement in the socio-political

it ensured comprehensive press coverage of BCC deputation's to Government sources. Fourthly, it expressed views to the CCIA. This was important because the International Department acted essentially as the national commission of the CCIA in Britain. If the DIA needed to make a representation to a government (other than the British Government) or to the United Nations, it would do so through the CCIA. Finally, the Department wanted to express its views to Christian Councils of other countries. These expressions may have been messages of greeting on significant political occasions (for example, the political independence of a country), or alternatively an expression of concern over questions of human rights⁹⁴ (e.g. missionary freedom). If the country concerned was within the British Empire or Commonwealth the DIA approached them directly, if in another territory the Department approached the CCIA. All significant questions over the actions or policies of another country would be directed to the Christian Council of that country. The Department would never contact the Government of another country directly but hope their registered concern (e.g. over perceived threats to world peace) would be related via the indigenous Christian Council to their own government sources.

realm is provided by Anthony Dyson in Bauckham and Elford (eds.) 1989, pp.95-114.

⁹⁴ See material in BCC/DIA/1/1/4.

In practical terms the DIA was interested in bringing a Christian judgement to bear on international relations. By drawing together representatives from groups of Christians who could speak with knowledge and experience the Department intended to make informative decisions *vis-à-vis* Government and other State apparatuses. The Department consequently, saw its role as educational, even prophetic, through the provision of information and the drawing out of the moral factors involved in international political decisions. Such authority as they had was moral and political rather than legal or canonical. This however carried the intrinsic disadvantage that the BCC as a Christian institution making pronouncements on ethical, social and political matters thereby gave the misleading impression of the unanimity of its own membership.⁹⁵ It also gave the DIA a very high informal authority to speak on behalf of the BCC. Genuine differences were therefore effectively ignored and it was

⁹⁵ Peter Hinchliff's intriguing article "Can the Church 'Do' Politics?" (Hinchliff 1981) questions the extent to which institutional organs such as the BCC really represent the Church. He suggests that it is in fact impossible for Church leaders to speak for the Church in any real sense and the debate over whether the Church 'ought' or 'should' be involved in politics is hence misconceived. Hinchliff's conclusion is that the Church cannot go into politics in any way at all -- except that it can and should make political *statements*, which will inevitably be chiefly negative and critical about moral ideals. Christians cannot go into politics either. They are there already and even political apathy will have political consequences. The assumption that the Churches' structures and ideas are determined by the particular societies within which they are placed forms the basis for Robin Gill's "Prophecy in a Socially Determined Church" (Gill 1979). This interesting sociological study however, also contains the error that no theologian before Constantine and the new-found relation of Church and State "was ever anything but a pacifist" (Gill 1979, p.27).

down to individuals within their midst to expose those differences and justify their disagreement.⁹⁶

Conclusion

The WCC and BCC were products of an optimistic world-view that involved three separate strands: Faith and Order, peace activism, Life and Work. The ecumenical movement, consequently, was established to further a spiritual and material reformation, to bring "God back" into social life and counter a secularised understanding of history.

The BCC became the principal (indeed the only truly interdenominational) non-Catholic body dealing with political issues for the British Christian community. Questions, however, should be asked of its contribution. Canon John Collins⁹⁷, for instance, had been asked to be General Secretary of the BCC by Geoffrey Fisher in 1945. Collins decision to decline the invitation is a telling indictment: "What, I then had to ask myself, could I hope to accomplish through an official body like the BCC, a body which, whenever a question demanding decisive action arises, is hampered by feeling itself representative of and answerable to so many and conflicting interests? The BCC

⁹⁶ See Mascall 1971 for the organisational weaknesses to which such ecclesiastical assemblies are subject; and Ridley 1978 for a consideration of the 'time-factor' that prevent Church Assemblies from dealing satisfactory with controversial issues.

⁹⁷ Famous for his Christian Socialism, Canon John Collins would become the first chair of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in 1958. See his autobiography (1966); and Gorry 1995 for Collins' role in the peace-movement.

inevitably goes the pace of the slowest man, and is a body through which unorthodox voices can be heard but faintly, if at all."⁹⁸

One obstacle to a progressive approach appears to be that, despite ecumenicalism being grounded in an optimistic theory of human nature, many of its precepts became increasingly defeatist. This was because it came to fruition at precisely the time nineteenth century progressivism was rejected in a retreat to orthodoxy. Two world wars and the failure of the League of Nations provoked a neo-orthodox protest within the Churches, just as realism had been the response to idealism within academia. Indeed, fears over the increasing conservatism of the project led figures like Canon John Collins, George Bell, Victor Gollancz, and Roger Wilson to set up 'Christian Action' (CA) in December 1946. Here Christian Aid saw itself marshalling the marked Christian post-war revival in a more politically radical direction than was being achieved through the BCC.⁹⁹ The desire of some Christians not to invest all their hopes in one project was strong, and accounts for the setting up of similar projects throughout the period of this study.

⁹⁸ Collins 1966, p.134.

⁹⁹ Hastings 1987, pp.428-35.

CHAPTER FOUR:

THE CHURCHES AND THE ATOMIC BOMB 1945-49

Introduction

The outbreak of world war in September 1939 prevented the WCC carrying out its mission immediately. Yet, as Ernest Payne pointed out, although World War II delayed the formation (or more accurately the implementation) of the World Council of Churches, it hastened the establishment of the British Council of Churches.¹ These productive developments however, belie the striking divisions that the war exacerbated in British Church attitudes to warfare. The 1939-1945 war exaggerated the traditional divisions between *just war* and pacifist approaches. Against this background this chapter locates the development of late twentieth century British Church debate towards war. It is particularly concerned with the increase in tensions between different traditions generated by the West's manufacture and use of the atomic bomb in 1945-48. The chapter examines the BCC's first contribution to nuclear thinking in 1946, *The Era of Atomic Power* Report (also known as the Oldham Report).

¹ Payne 1972, p.4.

Part I: The Debate

During World War Two pacifism became tainted by its association with appeasement and was blamed for the outbreak of hostilities.² Absolutists like Dr. Donald Soper (a Methodist) and the Revd. Dr. George Macloed (the Scottish Kirk), along with Canon Charles Raven, were discredited and banned from broadcasting by the BBC due to their anti-war efforts. Such action weakened pacifist credibility amongst many Christians who thought the war against Hitler a just one. Christian academics on the liberal wing of pacifism, including the major author Cecil John Cadoux,³ began to give weight to non-pacifist arguments. Many pacifists (not just Christian) concluded that war was now "relatively justified"⁴ in the face of evils like fascism. If, as Ceadel has argued,⁵ Hitler helped rehabilitate warfare amongst pacifists (inasmuch as he made opposition to Nazism a moral prerogative) he also spurred interest in the idea of a just war within the British Churches.

Despite serious defections from the Christian pacifist camp throughout the war the British Churches were not fully decisive in their acceptance or rejection of the just war

² Ceadel 1980, pp.294-315 for detail.

³ Cadoux 1940.

⁴ Cadoux argued that pacifists should "admit that it is better that (the war against fascism) should be victoriously carried through than that it should be discontinued before the undertaking is completed." See Cadoux 1940, p.216; and the commentary by Ceadel 1980, p.298.

⁵ Ceadel 1980, p.2.

doctrine.⁶ An indication of the depths of division is illustrated by the Church of England's 1940 Convocation (an assembly of bishops and clergy) at Canterbury. A resolution declaring *just war* as appropriate in the struggle with Germany was tabled, yet the bishops felt it better to refrain from such a decision until after the war. The British Churches found it difficult to criticize Allied action even the 'carpet bombing' of German cities. The lone, but vociferous, protests of George Bell (now Bishop of Chichester) were a notable exception to this rule.⁷

Polarization of Christian opinion in Britain did not seem to affect the Americans. American pacifist and *just war* theologians participated in a study formally known as *The Relation of the Church to the War in the Light of the Christian Faith: Report of A Commission of Christian Scholars Appointed by the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America*⁸ in 1944. This report (also referred to by the name of the Commission's Chair -- Robert Calhoun⁹) concluded that "the war is an event in the providential reign of God whom we know best through Christ crucified and triumphant. For

⁶ S. G. Evans 1954, pp. 280-3 recalls this episode. Also see Ormrod 1987, p. 191.

⁷ Canon Collins (1966, p.97) argues that these lone protests of George Bell were an important factor in preventing him becoming Archbishop of Canterbury after Archbishop Temple's death in 1944. This suggestion is also supported by Kent 1992, p.161. For detail of Bell's war-time protests against obliteration bombing and his heroic support for Bonhoeffer and the anti-Nazi German Confessing Church see Clements and Chandler 1995; Chandler 1995; Carey 1995.

⁸ The equivalent American council to the BCC, also a member church of the WCC. Potter (1969, pp.109-10) briefly discusses the report.

⁹ Professor of Historical Theology, Yale University.

Christian faith the whole cataclysm...is a tragic moment in God's work of creating and redeeming man, and in man's long struggle with himself and his Creator."¹⁰

Throughout the spring and summer of 1942 the possibility of a controlled atomic explosion had been discussed by British and refugee scientists joined by the MAUD Committee. In Government circles the idea of atomic weapons was linked to 'Great Power Status'. Prime Minister Churchill in particular saw the idea of the Bomb as an agent of fundamental change in world society. It was seen to be a cheaper (because it could be delivered by existing bombers) but more powerful potential form of destruction than existing conventional weapons. Whilst Britain was prepared to 'go it alone' and develop the source independently, most officials accepted that it would be advantageous for Britain to work with the United States. Yet the British still valued the idea of an *independent* atomic device and made clear to the US government that they wanted their own project once the war was won. Although the British did not want to rely on American goodwill, co-operation was seen as a valued pragmatic decision based on cost analysis and the fear that Hitler would manufacture the A-bomb first. Such fears led to decisive British-US government collaboration in the Manhattan project.¹¹

¹⁰ The Federal Council of Churches 1944, p.12.

¹¹ A full and comprehensive treatment of British atomic policy making is found in Gowing 1974. For the development of British strategic ideas see Groom 1974; Pierre 1972; Melissen 1993; Kemp's 1986 M.Litt; and Clark and Wheeler 1989. The Clark and Wheeler volume is particularly valuable in

By the end of November 1944 it was clear that Germany or Japan were not close to developing an atomic capability. Nevertheless the Allied development of the Bomb continued. On 8th May 1945 the European war ended with Germany's surrender. As the Pacific war dragged on the first atomic test was carried out in New Mexico on the 16th July 1945. Strengthened by this success the US government took the *unilateral*¹² decision to use the bomb on Japan with the argument that it would save lives by shortening war. On 6th August 1945 the first bomb was dropped on Hiroshima killing approximately 200,000 people. Three days later a second more powerful atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki¹³.

In 1945 the first chills of the Cold War were beginning to be felt and the prophetic sentiments of Professor Patrick Blackett¹⁴ were striking an uncomfortable note: "the dropping of the atomic bombs was not so much the last military act of the Second World War, as the first act of the cold diplomatic war with Russia"¹⁵. With the end of the second world war on the 14th August, the British Government was faced with the decision whether to opt out of the new atomic club. The entry into the nuclear age had been welcomed by many outside of Japan as it was commonly believed the Bomb had brought an

that its survey of strategy during the first post-war decade is based on official archival material.

¹² Groom 1974 offers detail on this decision.

¹³ A summary of the development, and horrifying effects of atomic weapons is found in Cox 1981, pp.15-58.

¹⁴ The British physicist and 1948 Nobel Prize winner. In 1958 Blackett would act as a founding member of the Institute for Strategic Studies. See Chapter Six.

¹⁵ Cited by Cox 1981, p.26.

early end to war. Exaggerated beliefs in the political (as opposed to military) potential of the 'Bomb that Ends War' reinforced Britain's decision to stay in the 'club'.¹⁶

Despite such tumultuous events, the birth of the nuclear age did not create unity of thought in the British Churches. Even so, for the first decade of the atomic age Church reports and Commissions were the only real forum for debate in Britain.¹⁷ The main source of further debate came from the BCC's sister organisation in the United States.

On the 9th August 1945, the day the second atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki, the US Federal Council of Churches Commission on a Just and Durable Peace¹⁸ issued a 'Statement on the Atomic Bomb.'¹⁹ Whilst the Commission was prepared to accept President Truman's assertion that "atomic power can become a powerful and forceful influence toward the maintenance of world peace,"²⁰ the statement called for US self-restraint and the development of the United Nations as an

¹⁶ It was not until 1946 that the new Attlee government, with virtually no public discussion, decided to manufacture the British A-bomb. The decision to develop the bomb was actually taken in 1946 by the Defence Committee of the Cabinet. Other Cabinet members learned of the decision through the circulation of its minutes. Passing references were made in the House of Commons but it was not until shortly before the testing of the first British device in the early 1950s that a formal announcement was made. For further commentary see Groom 1974, pp.20-39. For an example of a passing reference by the Minister of Defence see *Hansard: House of Commons*, Vol.450, col.2118, 12 May 1948.

¹⁷ See Groom 1974, p.196 for a reflection on the health of the debate at this time.

¹⁸ Interestingly the chair of this Commission was the international lawyer John Foster Dulles. Son of a minister and earnest Presbyterian, Dulles, became President Eisenhower's controversial Secretary of State between 1953 and 1959. His concept on massive retaliation would have a huge impact on later BCC thinking about nuclear warfare. See Chapter Six of this thesis.

¹⁹ 'Statement on the Atomic Bomb' dated 9 August 1945, in BCC/5/7/2v.

²⁰ Ibid.

organ of international control. This became the first resolution advocating the control and use of nuclear weapons adopted by an official body, secular or otherwise, in the United States.²¹ Mindful of this dramatic attempt by US Churches to lead opinion, concerned Christians in Britain began to write to Archibald Craig (in his capacity as BCC General Secretary) urging the BCC to declare against the Allies' use of the Bomb.

The Churches and the A-bomb

Letters from the BCC's constituent Churches began to arrive throughout August 1945 calling on the Council to lead in efforts to persuade the new Attlee government not to manufacture a British atomic device. The Hull Methodist Mission,²² for example, wrote to Craig asking for the BCC to declare against the Bomb and organise a mass Christian plebiscite so that British Christians could have their say over its manufacture. Whilst Craig shared the concern felt over the Bomb, he argued that it was very difficult for the BCC to speak with any authority on behalf of its constituent member Churches, or of Christians generally and it wasn't for him to urge what action, if any, the Council ought to take.²³ Craig did think, however, the suggestion of a 'Christian vote'

²¹ The BCC General Council would express formal approval of this statement when the Council met in October 1945. See resolution in BCC/DIA/1/1/4.

²² The Hull Methodist Mission had recently declared that "The use of the atomic bomb by any nation constitutes a sin against God and a crime against humanity". The letter accompanying this resolution is dated 16 August 1945 and signed by 'Mr. Blacknell'. Letter in BCC/5/7/2i.

²³ Craig to Blacknell dated 22 August 1945, in BCC/5/7/2i.

impractical because the result of "mass votes of this kind were often very misleading."²⁴ The calls for the BCC to take a lead in nuclear matters grew²⁵ and on the 30th August 1945 the Archbishop of Canterbury Geoffrey Fisher,²⁶ as President of the BCC, wrote to Craig suggesting action must be taken. Whilst Fisher thought nothing could be gained from discussion over whether the Bomb should have been used because there was "room for difference of opinion"²⁷ he did think a universal declaration by Christendom a good idea. For the Archbishop atomic bombs would certainly be used if there was another war. The important thing, therefore, was the universal repudiation of war and support for the US Federal Council's idea of transferring the control of the atomic bomb to the United Nations. Fisher suggested the BCC take up the challenge and produce a considered document. This according to the Archbishop should be submitted to the Council's member Churches for ratification and "not (have) the diffused weight of the BCC."²⁸ Once this was the document could be affirmed by "Christendom, America, Rome and the East."²⁹

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Harrison (the President of the Methodist Conference) for example wrote to the President of the BCC (the Archbishop of Canterbury, Geoffrey Fisher) on the 22 of August 1945 arguing that because the atom signified a turning point in history it demanded a response from the BCC because it showed that Britain at least, should be ready for a renunciation of war. Letter in BCC/5/7/2i. It is interesting that the pacifist publication *Peace News* (August 25 1945) contradicted the spirit of Harrison by treating the A-bomb not as a historic revolution, but simply as an increase in humanity's quantitative capacity for destruction.

²⁶ Fisher had replaced William Temple who died suddenly in 1944 after only thirty months of office.

²⁷ Hastings 1987, p.381.

²⁸ Letter from Fisher to Craig 30 August 1945 in BCC/5/7/2i.

²⁹ Ibid.

Craig produced a considered reply to Fisher's request.³⁰ He agreed that the atomic dilemma called for a united voice but felt the difficulty was in finding a procedure at once authoritative and reasonably speedy. Craig thought it best to leave out the possibility of united action on a scale larger than an all-British venture. A larger scale approach should, in Craig's opinion, be left to the WCC and if that were done the British statement would be a useful basis for discussion. For Craig the possibilities of British action were: first, a statement by the 'Big Five' -- the Anglican (English and Scottish), Roman Archbishops plus the two Moderators (Methodist and Presbyterian). This would be much the quickest way and very influential in the general Christian community. Yet this option would raise particular problems for the Moderators who, because they had no personal authority in matters of Church policy, would find it difficult to co-operate. Second, a statement could be issued by the BCC "off its own bat or after consultations with appropriate Church committees"³¹ (e.g. the Church and Nation Committee of the Church of Scotland who were engaged in preparing their own Report). Such a statement could not, however, be properly drafted in time for the forthcoming meeting of the General Assembly (October 1945), but could be done well by April 1946. Even then such an option would not be a statement 'of the Churches'. The third option, as Craig saw it, was a statement

³⁰ Craig to Fisher dated 3 September 1945, BCC/5/7/2i.

³¹ Ibid.

drafted and approved by the BCC and then referred to the Churches for endorsement at individual assemblies meeting next in 1946. On the whole he was personally inclined to think that, because the atomic issue looked like being a long-term one, the disadvantage of a slow tempo should be accepted and this last option adopted.

The pressure on the BCC to act was steadily growing. Fisher was also under personal pressure to act in his capacity of Archbishop. A number of Church of England members led by Canon Hudson (St. Albans), approached the Archbishop requesting that he form a Commission to consider and report on the moral and spiritual implications of modern warfare. Fisher's correspondence³² with Craig reveals that he was against the idea³³ and hoped a BCC report would relieve the pressure for him to act personally. The Archbishop wrote to Craig arguing that the BCC start work on the British project, but rather than dealing with pacifism as such, consider whether "the old phrase the *just war* still had any definable meaning or relevance."³⁴ Craig decided that the best candidate to draw together and act as Chair for such a commission would be his friend and vice-president of the BCC, Joe Oldham.

³² Letter from Fisher to Craig, 15 October 1945 in BCC/5/7/2i.

³³ Reasons why are not specified but one can assume that the Archbishop wanted to avoid becoming embroiled in such a controversial and potentially divisive project.

³⁴ Fisher to Craig, 15 October 1945, in BCC/5/7/2i.

Oldham's Task

Joe Oldham was less than enthusiastic at being approached.³⁵ He wished that Craig would find someone who was "less of a lame dog to help", but in the circumstances found it difficult to refuse. Oldham accepted: first, out of friendship and "because of the office confirmed on me by the BCC (i.e. vice-president), the claims of which I do so little to meet, I feel under an obligation to respond to the best of my ability to any demands you make on me."³⁶ Secondly, because he could give the time required and provide the connections desired. Finally, because he felt the commission might contribute to what he saw as the highly desirable end of cementing relations between the BCC and his new Christian Frontier Council.³⁷

At the October 1945 General Council meeting the BCC instructed its Executive Committee "to set up, after consultation with the President (Fisher), a small committee, membership of which shall not be limited to members of Council, to consider the problems created by the discovery of atomic energy and to draw up a statement to be submitted to the Council."³⁸ Oldham was formally offered, and accepted,

³⁵ See letters to Craig from Oldham dated 19 and 21 October 1945 in BCC/5/7/2i.

³⁶ Letter dated 19 October 1945, BCC/5/7/2i.

³⁷ The Christian Frontier Council was the lineal descendent of Oldham's Council on the Christian Faith and the Common Life, which in turn was the successor to the Oxford conference on Church, Community and State. This contemporary project produced an important publication dealing with social issues called the *Christian News-Letter* which published articles by well-known contemporaries including Anthony Eden, Arnold Toynbee, Richard Crossman, Sir Stafford Cripps, R.H. Tawney and Basil Liddell-Hart.

³⁸ BCC/5/7/2i.

the Chair of the committee. The Council decided that the 'working party' should communicate with the Executive Committee of the WCC (as Craig had earlier argued) and that it would be best if the WCC refrained from issuing its own statement until it could build on the work of national bodies and co-ordinate conclusions. The Council Executive thought the Commission should be about 12 strong (with six lay-members) with powers to draw others into consultation as necessary. Oldham was keen on securing a short title to convey the group's labours succinctly to the press:

...to bring in anything about problems which concern Christians would make the title too long. The same objection applies to anything like 'the moral and spiritual implications of atomic energy', apart from the fact that atomic energy in itself has no moral or spiritual implications, which have to do with the use which human beings make of it. I incline to suggest for a title as a compromise 'Commission on the New Era of Atomic Energy.'³⁹

It was decided that the theological foundations of the Report should be well and truly laid.⁴⁰

The composition of the Commission was not without controversy. Oldham was keen for the Commission to achieve a good balance between Left and Right⁴¹ and urged a solid foundation in Christian ethics. The views of the arch-

³⁹ Oldham to Craig, 9 November 1945, BCC/5/7/2i.

⁴⁰ See unsigned letter from the director of Council of Church Training Colleges to the Bishop of Bristol (Wooder), 5 November 1945, BCC/5/7/2i.

⁴¹ Commission members Mary Stocks and Donald MacKinnon are described as belonging markedly to the Left. Bishop Bell is ignored. Pointedly, Right-Wing members of the Commission are not listed. Oldham to Craig 9 November 1945, BCC/5/7/2i. MacKinnon, a well-known pacifist, critic of Platonic theology, and Marxist sympathiser, went on to join Bell as a notable supporter of CND after its 1958 formation.

conservative Fisher⁴² are important in understanding the eventual composition of the group. It was Oldham who suggested that, if the Archbishop wanted to keep an eye on things, it would be possible to appoint someone.⁴³ The Bishop of Winchester (Haigh⁴⁴), despite his Manichaeian attitudes, was seen by both Oldham and Archbishop as a natural choice. Bishop Bell was seen by Oldham as the "sensible alternative", but Fisher did not like Bell's well-established reputation as 'trouble-maker'. Oldham, like Craig, was mindful to be sensitive to the Archbishop's views despite criticism regarding Mervyn Haigh as "theologically incompetent".⁴⁵ When Bishop Haigh proved to be too busy to serve on the Commission,⁴⁶ Oldham wrote a series of letters to the Archbishop firmly requesting an alternative bishop if Fisher did not want a "pacifist Bishop" (sic) serving on the Commission.⁴⁷ Although Oldham was content with Bell he wanted the Archbishop to relieve Bell of some of his duties. He became increasingly exasperated by Fisher's refusal to reduce Bell's work-load or offer an alternative bishop. Oldham was

⁴² Victor Gollancz knew Fisher very well from his days, after the first world war, as a teacher at Repton under the Headship of Fisher. Gollancz's writings are full of barbed criticisms of both Fisher's conservatism and distinctly bellicose attitudes to war. See particularly Gollancz 1958, p.122; or the many references in the excellent biography by Dudley Edwards 1987.

⁴³ Letter from Oldham to Craig 21 October 1945, BCC/5/7/2i.

⁴⁴ Mervyn Haigh, Bishop of Winchester, was well known for his extreme attitude to Soviet Communism.

⁴⁵ This description of Haigh is McCaughey's, who in his capacity as Secretary to the Commission, used it in a letter to Craig on the 31 October 1945. Letter in BCC/5/7/2i.

⁴⁶ A letter from Haigh to Craig on the 8 November 1945 details his engagements. See BCC/5/7/2i.

keen to fix up a meeting of the Commission before, or just after, Christmas to insure the Report was ready for the Council meeting in April. To Oldham the Commission was the top BCC priority as "unless something effective can be done about this, all our other activities are reduced to futility"⁴⁸ and couldn't understand the Archbishop's attitude. Oldham eventually secured Bell's membership but without the Archbishop's help.

Some of the names suggested by Oldham were greeted with dismay by John McCaughey, employed as an assistant to Oldham with the rank of Assistant Departmental Officer.⁴⁹ The exclusion of Oxford professor Canon Mortimer "one of the most brilliant and accomplished minds of his generation", was seen as preposterous whilst the inclusion of both Violet Markham and the Professor of IR at Aberystwyth, Sir Alfred Zimmern, as "scraping the barrel".⁵⁰ McCaughey was amazed that Philip Mairet was omitted. For him, Mairet's "articles on the complexity of problems raised by the discovery of atomic energy have been widely acclaimed as far more penetrating than

⁴⁷ The series of letters between the Archbishop and Oldham have not survived, but Oldham repeats his frustration with Fisher in a letter to Craig dated 19 November 1945, in BCC/5/7/2i.

⁴⁸ Oldham to Craig, 19 November 1945, in BCC/5/7/2i.

⁴⁹ McCaughey, as secretary of the Commission particularly voiced his dismay at some names suggested in his letter to Craig on the 31 October 1945. Letter in BCC/5/7/2i.

⁵⁰ McCaughey states "surely the Commission could find better class minds and more up to date than these". See letter to Craig, 31 October 1945, in BCC/5/7/2i. These names were not consequently included as full-Commission members. Zimmern would, however, serve as an advisor. Women it seems were also not a first choice. Oldham argued (in a letter to Craig dated the 26 October 1945) that "we might perhaps to have a woman. She (Violet Markham) would markedly add to the wisdom and insight of the group."

anything else which has appeared. The quality of sensitiveness to the whole range of associations which you put among the first desiderata of the Commission's personnel, is most highly exemplified in him."⁵¹

The Commission

By the 28th November 1945 the membership of the Commission was finally secured but Oldham was concerned about the lack of a scientist within the group.⁵² He thought any press release should therefore include a note about consultations with the scientific community.⁵³

The Commission was fifteen-strong (two women) and a mixture of theologians, philosophers, lay Christians, clergy. The members were: Oldham as Chair, the Rev. M. E. Aubrey (General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland), John Baillie (Professor of Divinity in the University of Edinburgh), Sir Robert Birley (Head of Charterhouse), Kathleen Bliss (editor of *The Christian News-Letter*), the Bishop of Chichester (Dr. George Bell), Newton Flew (Principal of Wesley House, Cambridge), Rev. Norman Goodall⁵⁴ (Chair of the BCC's DIA and Secretary to the IMC), Kenneth Grubb⁵⁵ (London Chair

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² There was also no military, strategic experts or politicians. Kenneth Grubb (later Sir) would, however, make a name for himself as a political commentator.

⁵³ Oldham wrote to Craig explaining that the "only reason for not including a scientist is that we are so ignorant of the people concerned that a good deal of explorative work is necessary in order to make the right choice." Oldham to Craig 28 November 1945, BCC/5/7/2i.

⁵⁴ Goodall would serve in the BCC Group that produced the 1959 Report *Christians and Atomic War*.

⁵⁵ Grubb also served in the BCC Groups that produced the 1959 Report *Christians and Atomic War*, and the 1961 Report *The Valley of Decision*.

of the CCIA and secretary-general of the Hispanic and Luso-Brazillian councils), Rev. C. E. Hudson (Canon at St. Albans), Donald MacKinnon (Oxford Lecturer in Philosophy, Natural and Comparative Religions, member of the British Committee on the Theory of International Politics), Sir Walter Moberly, Professor A.D. Ritchie (Professor of Logic and Metaphysics at the University of Edinburgh), Dennis Routh (former fellow of All Souls, Oxford), Mary Stocks (Principal of Westfield College, University of London), and Rev. J. D. McCaughey, as secretary.⁵⁶

The Commission appointed by the BCC "to consider the problems created by the discovery of atomic energy"⁵⁷ discussed issues over three weekends between January and March 1946.⁵⁸ Members were asked to provide written comments on memoranda, circulated drafts of chapters, and aim "to understand what is implied in the challenge of this event to mankind and what answer it demands."⁵⁹

In procedural terms Oldham saw it necessary for the Commission to be both workable and able to secure the representation of relevant experience and knowledge. In this way others were co-opted⁶⁰ on the clear understanding that the members of the Commission had ultimate responsibility for the

⁵⁶ Information from preface to *The Era of Atomic Power*, BCC 1946.

⁵⁷ BCC 1946, p.7.

⁵⁸ 4-7 January; 2-4 March; and 29 March-1 April 1946.

⁵⁹ BCC 1946, p.7.

⁶⁰ Drafts of chapters were sent to 22 prominent non-Commission members for comments including the controversial poet T. S. Eliot (a friend of Bell); lay-theologian Prof. Dorothy Emmett; Prof. Karl Mannheim (author of *Ideology and Utopia*, lecturer at the LSE); Prof. Michael Polanyi (chemist and social philosopher); and Canon Charles Raven. See BCC/5/7/2iv.

Report. It was, however, not clear which 'constituency of believers' the Report should be aimed at. Oldham was not sure whether the Report should be addressed solely to Christians, or whether it should also be aimed at reaching readers outside the Churches. Robert Birley saw the Report as something which should appeal to all sorts of intelligent non-believers, and consequently "must produce something which would startle the intelligent non-Christian public, something both useful for the BCC and also alarming and interesting to other people."⁶¹ Dennis Routh thought the Report should be as un-contentious and popularist as possible and "stimulate but not shock [because] it would be difficult to provoke and shock the ordinary public without provoking and shocking the BCC."⁶² Eventually it was agreed that while the Report should be presented to the Churches, it should be written to enlist the interest of the intelligent public, Christian and non-Christian. The target in view was the "intelligent sixth-former."⁶³ It was hoped that the Report would be thoroughly competent and written in a challenging way. The intention was to provoke and stimulate adults.⁶⁴ There was a strong consensus of opinion that the Commission should establish as close contact as possible with other countries. Archibald Craig (who appears in the minutes to these meetings but not in

⁶¹ Minutes of first meeting of Commission, 4-7 January 1946, in BCC/5/7/2ii, p.1.

⁶² Ibid. p.2.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

the acknowledgements of the published report) was particularly keen that the recently convened Church of Scotland sub-committee looking into 'Peace and War' should co-operate with the BCC Commission⁶⁵. This was not only sensible because the Church of Scotland was a member Church of the British Council, but also because John Baillie, Professor of Divinity in the University of Edinburgh, was member of both Commissions. Whilst the Scottish sub-committee welcomed the BCC suggestions they were nevertheless anxious to declare their own mind despite being represented in Council. To the Scots it was a case of appreciating the Council's greater resources and wider range of contacts, whilst not evading their own local responsibilities. The sub-committee's secretary (John Pitt-Watson⁶⁶) summed up their view in a letter to Craig dated November 1945. He writes: "the atomic bomb has created a situation which each church must face, not -- let us pray -- by itself but certainly *for* itself. A united Christian front is doubly to be wished, but, to be of real value, it must be a real front along which the Churches are officially aligned."⁶⁷ The Scottish report would not be published until May 1946 (i.e. after the BCC Report).

Oldham was in close contact⁶⁸ with John Foster Dulles' Commission on a Just and Durable Peace, and with the recently

⁶⁵ Craig to the secretary of the Church of Scotland sub-committee (John Pitt-Watson): 12 November 1945, BCC/5/7/2i.

⁶⁶ Pitt-Watson would go on to be joint vice-president of the BCC 1954-56.

⁶⁷ Pitt-Watson to Craig 17 November 1945.

⁶⁸ Letters were written and received at least twice a month. Plans were exchanged, ideas tested, conclusions broached. Every chapter of the

reconvened US Federal Council of Churches Commission under the Chair of Professor Calhoun⁶⁹. Contact was kept with Continental Churches through Oldham's links with the Provisional Committee of the WCC in Geneva. The Commission agreed it was appropriate to privately communicate related papers to Dr. Vissor 't Hooft (WCC General Secretary) but felt it undesirable for such BCC material to be used in any pronouncement the Provisional Committee of the WCC may make at their February 1946 meeting.

Oldham saw four main topics that needed to be dealt with. These topics were grouped into broad areas: first, a diagnosis of the atomic power situation; second, questions relating to the control of the Bomb (e.g. prevention of war, world government etc.); third, questions relating to modern methods of warfare; and finally, questions involving a challenge to prevailing assumptions and values. It was this last group that would serve as the main area for discussion. By the 13th February 1946 the first drafts of the report's chapters were ready. Some of the comments received are particularly revealing. Birley notes:

May I say, most earnestly, that we must avoid one mistake. We must not write our report for the older scientists who are worried by what has happened, and for the Modernists of the last generation, who found some kind of synthesis between Religion and Science which means nothing to the present generation. We should write

'Reports in Progress' were sent to each party for comments. Correspondence in file BCC/5/7/2v.

⁶⁹ This Commission had already released the 1944 Report 'On the Relation of the Church to the War' (see above). The Federal Council had now asked the Commission to consider the moral and spiritual implications of the atomic bomb.

it for the young scientist (the young men overwhelmed by curiosity), for the young Communist Utopians who have a real faith in Science (which is doomed to be disappointed), and to the young Christians who do not find in Modernism any solution. We must beware, of course, of Petainism, using Christianity to bolster up a bad social system, and of Wilberforeism, refusing to accept the truth when it is found.... Do not let us be afraid of the "strong protest". It will be a sign that we have said something worth saying.⁷⁰

The essential optimism Birley feels in the face of the atomic age is clear. The "strong protest" advocated was not for pacifism or any form of unilateralism. This sense comes out distinctly in the final draft despite a rather more radical alternative developed by the US Churches.

Throughout 1945-6 a constant ebb of correspondence flowed between Oldham and the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America. The US Commission had been quick to reconvene in order to supplement their 1944 Report *The Relation of the Church to the War in the Light of the Christian Faith*⁷¹ in view of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The 1946 US Federal Council Report

In March 1946 the Calhoun Commission issued their statement *Atomic Warfare and the Christian Faith: Report of the Commission on the Relation of the Church to the War in the Light of the Christian Faith Appointed by the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America*⁷². This warned that "our

⁷⁰ These comments are found on a draft chapter in BCC/5/7/2ii.

⁷¹ Federal Council of Churches 1944.

⁷² Federal Council of Churches 1946. This report is referred to by Driver 1964, p.205; mentioned by Ormrod 1987, p.196; and reviewed by Potter 1969, p.110; Veldman 1994, p.157.

latest epochal triumph of science and technology may prove to be our last."⁷³ It asserted "In the light of present knowledge, we are prepared to affirm that the policy of obliteration bombing as actually practised in World War II, culminating in the use of atomic bombs against Japan, is not defensible on Christian premises."⁷⁴ Whilst the Calhoun Commission did not disavow the just war doctrine, they did argue that the methods of modern warfare were not "proportionate" or "discriminatory between combatants and non-combatants". As a consequence they "recognise[d] important new light on man's part in history [because it is now possible]... that by misdirection of atomic energy, man can bring earthly history to a premature close. His freedom, then, is more decisive and dangerous than we had suspected"⁷⁵. Because nuclear fission raised the ultimate question of God's relationship with humanity "...if a premature end of history should come...the problem then is whether beyond the end of history God's justice are still a ground for hope, or whether the stultification of human life by a premature end is to be feared."⁷⁶ The conclusion that atomic warfare was "morally indefensible" shocked many in its certainty. The Report made a seminal contribution to Christian debate: it was the first official statement of a Christian nuclear pacifist position. The Commission did not reject war *per se* but weapons of mass

⁷³ Federal Council of Churches 1946, p.3.

⁷⁴ Ibid. p.11.

⁷⁵ Ibid. p.20.

⁷⁶ Ibid. p.23.

destruction, especially (but not exclusively) the atom bomb. On the 6th March 1946 the Federal Council's Executive Committee adopted one of the most controversial sections of its findings as a message on 'The Churches and World Order'. The Council stated:

In the initial use and continued production of atomic bombs, the US has given and is giving sanction to these weapons of mass annihilation. We believe that this policy must not be continued. Our nation having first used the atomic bomb, has a primary duty to seek to reverse the trend which it began. Unless the US will give moral leadership and accept risks for the sake of a new birth of confidence, we see little hope for escape from the growing crisis.⁷⁷

This impassioned plea for a moral international politics suggested: first a well-defined Christian eschatological hope for a this-world future; second, that the unilateral renunciation of atomic weapons was a legitimate and necessary aspect of this hope; and third, that the Churches had a role to play in rejecting pessimistic international theory and international politics. The Report became a salutary lesson in applied theology and ethics.

In March 1946, within three months of the first meeting of the Commission, the BCC group completed its task. On Thursday 2nd May⁷⁸ the Council accepted the Report, authorised its publication as *The Era of Atomic Power*⁷⁹, and instructed its Executive Committee to take steps to give it wide publicity.

⁷⁷ See BCC/5/7/2v.

⁷⁸ The Council endorsed the Report through a resolution, see BCC/5/7/2ii.

⁷⁹ For a comprehensive review see BCC 1973 pp.5-8; Ormrod 1987, pp.194-98; and William Johnston's "The Churches' Role in the Nuclear Debate" in Davis (ed.) 1986, pp.243-7. Driver 1964, pp.204-5; Potter 1969, p.111; Bailey 1987, p.29; and Veldman 1994, p.157 mention the Report incidentally. Groom

Part II: The Era of Atomic Power

The Oldham Report opened by outlining the Commission's understanding of its task. It acknowledged that, because the Commission was expected to report back to the Council's half-yearly meeting on April 30th, the time allocated to the Report's composition had been inadequate. The alternative option (delaying its findings until September) was not considered because it was known that some of the Churches would be considering the issues at the meetings of their Assemblies in the summer:

If the report of the Commission were delayed, separate and isolated action would have to be taken by the Churches in place of action in the light of consultation between their representatives and of joint enquiry into a question of the deepest common concern. It was believed that there were many in the Churches, and perhaps outside them, who were much perplexed and would welcome such information and guidance as the Commission might be able to give them. For these reasons the Commission decided, in spite of the difficulties, to do its best to present its report in April.⁸⁰

It began by describing the discovery of the atom as an event comparable to the discovery of fire and one of the great turning points in history. Not surprisingly (considering the propensity of theologians and philosophers on the Commission) the Report is philosophical and speculative in tone. It asks 'What has happened?' in the aftermath of Hiroshima. To the Commission the atomic bomb was the culmination of a process (the advancement of science) which had been going on for two

1974, pp.196-98 also includes a detailed report but great care has to be taken when considering it. Groom mixes up his review of the BCC publication with a later (1948) Church of England publication.

⁸⁰ BCC 1946, p.7.

or three generations. The atom bomb, however, did not present people with new problems but made more acute and urgent problems already present: "Our aim in this report is to understand what is implied in the challenge of this event to mankind and what answer it demands."⁸¹

The atomic discovery had both good and bad potentialities. It confronted society with an immediate threat to the survival of the human race but placed at the disposal of states hitherto unimagined sources of power. On one hand, the Report acknowledged that there could be no 'adequate defence' to the Bomb and appreciated the logic of the US Federal Council of Churches:

The atomic bomb has so increased the scale of destructiveness that a single stroke, or a few successive blows, may annihilate the industrial capacity, and consequently the recuperative power, of the nation attacked... The incentive to strike a crippling blow first and the possibility of doing this are incalculably increased, and a premium is thus placed on swift, ruthless aggression... The use of atomic weapons makes war not only more destructive and treacherous, but more irresponsible than ever.⁸²

It accepted that humanity was overshadowed by the fact that for the first time in history it was equipped with the power to "blot out in a moment of wickedness or folly an entire civilisation."⁸³ Yet, on the other hand, the Commission saw in the social utility of nuclear power grounds for hope. Caught up in the optimism of the post-war period the Commission talked of a new energy source, economic recovery,

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² BCC 1946, abstracts from pp.10, 11, and 12.

⁸³ Ibid. p.12.

and the Allied victory. The Report looked forward to a new era of Anglo-American hegemony in which the Bomb would serve as a new power to promote human well-being. *The Era of Atomic Power* was concerned not so much with the impact of the Bomb on the Japanese, but rather in examining the 'social strains' created by its development within the West. The Commission felt that the Bomb had unleashed such feelings of despair and hopelessness that it threatened future birth-rates:

The mere discovery of the atom bomb itself, even if it is never used, might well create such strains in our society as to destroy it. If human experience counts for anything we can only conclude that in such a state of insecurity most men and women would be forced back into a life that accepted impermanence as something inevitable, and would live only for the present.⁸⁴

Fundamental to the group's thinking was the Augustinian belief that "there are no Christian grounds for supposing that God will take back the freedom bestowed on man, or will certainly intervene to prevent its abuse."⁸⁵ This did not tip the Report into the eschatological radicalness of the 1946 US report⁸⁶, but towards a new self-awareness:

An event so stupendous in the physical world as the disclosure of the secret of the atom may well demand and evoke a corresponding change in the human mind. It need cause no surprise if men's thoughts were to begin to take a radically new direction...⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Ibid. p.17.

⁸⁵ Ibid. p.20.

⁸⁶ In December 1945 Dr. John Bennett, secretary of the Calhoun Commission, had wrote to Oldham suggesting that a draft of the BCC report pay increased attention to the necessity of eschatological thinking. The note suggested that, though the BCC was competent in historical study, it was paying insufficient attention to the ramifications of nuclear power (i.e. its potential to extinguish all life). Letter from Bennett to Oldham, 11 December 1945, BCC/5/7/2v.

⁸⁷ BCC 1946, p.20.

Responsible Citizenship

The Report saw 'progress' as a Christian idea that demanded faith and continuing hope. Christians were asked to adopt a pragmatic attitude by participating in "responsible citizenship", and not separating spheres of Christian obligation (i.e. temporal from spiritual):

To advocate withdrawal, not merely as an individual vocation, but as a generally right attitude to society, is to deny the significance of politics and to despair of civilisation. It is a criticism directed not simply against the rot in western society, but against its foundations. It calls in question the whole attempt to fuse spirituality and power in a just and human social order, and by so doing writes off whole tracts of history and experience as irrelevant to the divine purpose.⁸⁸

The Church had a social contract to fulfil here because it was morally obliged to draw upon the resources of faith and ensure the control of scientific power.⁸⁹ The writers believed that it was the liberal democratic State that allowed people to influence, make and shape their own futures:

... the idea of democracy, as it has been worked out in the thought and practice of the British people, offers the possibility of subjecting power to the control of reason and justice and is, for this reason, directly relevant to the problems of the atomic age.⁹⁰

A view of secular progress alone, however, was a myth because democracy had made freedom and rights more than mere expressions of the interests of a dominant class. In liberal democracy power was limited by law in the interests of justice and this was "the outstanding political achievement of the

⁸⁸ Ibid. p.28.

⁸⁹ Ibid. p.30.

⁹⁰ Ibid. p.32.

West."⁹¹ The Church, however, should not let the State forget the lessons of Thrasymachus and allow "justice to be nothing but the interest of the stronger."⁹² Have the Churches the courage, the Report asks, to inspire some counterpart to the secular myth of progress rendered more profound by the insight of the Gospel, and more capable of tiding people through the nuclear era?⁹³

⁹¹ Ibid. p.39.

⁹² i.e. Plato 1941, Book I Chap.3; c.f. Augustine's discussion (1972, Book XIX Chap.21). This Platonic reference is a sure sign of the Commission's determination to escape both 'cynical' (hard-line) and God-less realism. It is true that Thrasymachus stands, next to the Athenian generals in Thucydides' *History*, as a figure from the ancient world most scholars would classify as realist. It is true also that the Oldham Report suggests Socrates more than Thrasymachus, for Thrasymachus would not have talked of responsibilities or obligations between states, and certainly not of the application of ideals (Christian or otherwise) to a global society. Two clarifications are necessary. First, during the course of his discussion with Socrates, Thrasymachus as Hare and Joynt (1982, pp.24-7) point out, came to use the terms "just" and "unjust" more conventionally so that "injustice" was equated with the unbridled pursuit of self-interest. For Thrasymachus "the best and most perfectly unjust state" is hence the State most likely to be "unjustly attempting to enslave other states", or to have "already enslaved them, and be holding them in subjection" (Book I Chap.4). It seems logical that a State that was perfectly unjust on these terms would not be able to cooperate with any other in the pursuit of goals it was unable to attain single-handed. Most twentieth-century realists would not deny this inevitable overlap between the interests of states, and the need for relations of co-operation or 'balances of power'. Second, Hans Morgenthau (1946, p.35) ascribed to Thrasymachus the view that "the political sphere was governed exclusively by the rules of the political art of which ethical evaluation was a mere ideological by-product". Morgenthau thereby disassociated his realism from Thrasymachus's 'sophist realism' (c.f. the 'Nietzschean' realism heralded by Der Derian in Der Derian [ed.] 1995, p.385) because he believed that there were universal ethical demands but ones in 'tragic' tension with the demands of power. These ethical demands could not hence be made of states because states could not operate by them; the best they could do was to operate by the perverted reflection of them, namely ideology (see Hare and Joynt 1982, p.36-7). If conventional realists like Morgenthau felt it necessary to distance themselves from Thrasymachus's foolishness then it should not diminish the BCC-as-realist claim but rather reinforce the many flavours realism can take as well as the difficulties in putting thinkers into categories. In other words, although there is conceptual distance between Plato's (Socrates, the BCC, and Morgenthau) 'soft' realism and Thrasymachus's 'hard' Realpolitik, both are versions of realism as classically understood.

⁹³ BCC 1946, pp.30-1.

The Commission wanted to encourage Christian groups of democratic fellowship to become the nuclei of a new social consciousness. As democracy could only become effective through being embodied in institutions it was a vital task to preserve, and foster tradition, whilst adapting to meet the demands of a changing society:

It may be a special function of the Church in the present crisis to offer to men a creative interpretation of their political activities, in order that with the aid of Christian insight they may have a clear understanding of what it is that they are striving, often unconsciously, to embody.⁹⁴

This was a field in which the Churches were peculiarly suited by their distinctive interests, purposes and inherited opportunities. With regards to unilateral disarmament:

...a nation which decided as a deliberate and declared act of national policy in all circumstances to renounce the use of the atomic bomb... would, in fact, be committing itself to a policy of unilateral disarmament which, in any conflict with a power still ready to use the bomb, would render all other attempts of armament totally useless.... The renunciation by Great Britain of the use of the bomb...does not, of course, mean immunity for Britain from the threat of attack by the atomic bomb... Radical as it may seem, the policy of unilateral renunciation of atomic warfare can by no means be dismissed as absurd.... Uncompromising obedience to the claims of the kingdom which is not of this world may have a direct political relevance.⁹⁵

The Report was concerned with the protection of imperial responsibilities and 'Great Power' status. It supported the British State (because of its social and educational advancement of colonial peoples) and the British Constitution (for its ideas of popular sovereignty and the supremacy of

⁹⁴ Ibid. p.38.

⁹⁵ Ibid. pp.40-1, 53.

law). This particular emphasis on 'power' and 'national interest' leads to what is characterised by Ormrod as the "dangerous analogy"⁹⁶ -- the idea that for Britain to renounce the Bomb would be tantamount to renouncing Great Power status, "equivalent to an attempt, in the naval age, to wage naval war without the use of capital ships."⁹⁷ It was the political advantages of the atomic bomb, rather than its military utility, which was thus paramount in the Commission's thinking. In this light the Commission's position was no different to that of British Government thinking.⁹⁸ The implication being that the right to use atomic weapons was not rejected, but indeed reserved, for the protection of the State. Britain's renunciation of the Bomb, and her Great Power status, would be pointless because it would not bring immunity from the threat of attack. Unilateralism would mean the surrender to any power which was without British scruples. It would bring the end of the British way of life and the system of political and moral ideas embodied in the Commonwealth.

To the Commission, unilateralism was both absurd and dangerous. This was because Western society had developed within, by virtue of its close interlocking system of material organisation and power, a special body of ideals and principles. For the British State, modern warfare was

⁹⁶ Ormrod 1987, p.198.

⁹⁷ BCC 1946, p.41.

⁹⁸ Clark and Wheeler (1989) support this view of official British thinking.

profoundly ideological because its genius lay in a balance between power and ideas. It was this distinctly British awareness of the unity between political independence and way of life "which led [Britain] to stand and fight on alone in 1940 against apparently hopeless odds."⁹⁹ An effective world community was the only "reasonable hope of eliminating from human society the danger of atomic war and therefore of preserving western civilisation from destruction." This was so because public opinion in the Soviet Union could not restrain government in the same way it could in the West:

We must therefore be prepared for a period during which Russia will appear as the crucial obstacle to the emergence of world community and even as a menace to world peace.¹⁰⁰

Force, consequently, was probably the best means open to defend a just way of life and maintain the conditions necessary for the growth of world community.

Modern warfare and the Christian Conscience

Although a minority on the Commission wanted to condemn the American use of the Bomb as "morally indefensible"¹⁰¹, a clear majority felt unable to issue unqualified condemnation.¹⁰² The Commissioners claimed that: first, they were not sufficiently in possession of the facts; and second, using the bomb had undoubtedly saved lives by forcing the Japanese to surrender earlier than they wished. Whilst the writers supported the

⁹⁹ Ibid. p.42.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. p.46.

¹⁰¹ c.f. Federal Council of Churches 1946, p.11.

¹⁰² i.e. Stocks, Bell and MacKinnon.

just war limitation that condemned the use of violence in excess of strict military necessity, without access to the facts they believed such an assessment was impossible to ascertain. They declared that Christians could not form proper judgement on the use of the Bomb unless they lobbied Government to obtain the facts upon which a considered judgement could be made. Whilst the Report acknowledged that the Bomb involved a great extension of the practice of indiscriminate massacre and accepted that 'Total War' failed to justify the criteria of *just war* (i.e. they accepted that the end does not always justify the means), it endorsed:

The argument that on balance the use of the atomic bomb saved hundreds of thousands of lives, both in the forces of the forces of the United Nations and in Japan itself, undoubtedly has weight. But it is one of peculiar danger, since it can be used to justify any kind of barbarity.¹⁰³

Atomic warfare did not present a new ethical problem, but rather introduced a new quantitative element into an old problem. For the Report, ignoring the 'carpet bombing' of World War Two, the problem was that until the advent of the atomic bomb it was possible to limit aerial attack to precision bombing and refrain from using weapons of mass destruction:

...the decision to introduce atomic warfare... brought into operation a new weapon, the nature of which involved of necessity a great extension of the practice of indiscriminate massacre. The initiative in introducing these new weapons was taken by those who claimed to be the champions of civilisation... What we have to deplore is the steady deterioration of public sensitiveness to

¹⁰³ Ibid., p.50.

the indiscriminate massacre of non-combatants... It is clear insofar as war becomes 'total', in the sense that every means may be adopted that appears conducive to victory, and that the attack is directed not against armies but against nations by methods of mass destruction, the restraints in waging war which have been regarded by the Christian tradition as essential to a 'just' war disappear. The question has to be asked afresh whether the destruction of an entire population, including the aged and the young, is not an act so absolutely wrong in itself that no Christian can assent to it or share in it.¹⁰⁴

In suggesting that the effects of the bombing of Hiroshima were not worse than the obliteration bombing of German cities, the Report reveals three points about the Commission's attitude. First, the writers favoured the *just war* tradition. Second, that the BCC were ignorant of both the immediate and long term consequences of radiation and fallout. Finally, that they viewed atomic weapons as being nothing other than extremely efficient explosives.¹⁰⁵

Responsibility for Defence

Although loyalty to Christ was stressed as more important than loyalty to the State, in Augustinian fashion, Christians had certain responsibilities towards defence. The Report did very little to oppose atomic weapons. It declared opposition to them as an optional product of individual conscience. The seemingly unconditional character of the demand for peace was seen as no less insistent than the Christian responsibility to "defend the fundamental rights and liberties of men and the

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp.49-52.

¹⁰⁵ This is, of course, not so surprising considering the lack of a scientist on the Commission.

institutions through which in our society these are affirmed, protected and developed."¹⁰⁶ Whilst the Report agreed that no Christian *should* approve of the use of nuclear weapons, it also stressed other 'this-world' responsibilities. It is because of these responsibilities (including, but not exclusively, the responsibility for defence) that the main stream of Christian thought had recognised the legitimacy of war for a just cause (i.e. *just war*):

If there is a responsibility of the secular power, which Christians must acknowledge, to defend the right, if necessary by force of arms, this responsibility is not, it may be argued, and cannot be, diminished or altered by technical advances and the introduction of new weapons, even though the resulting problems may be far more acute¹⁰⁷.

Western democratic institutions were, in this way, a profoundly significant transcription of Christian insight that demanded active support. Here the Report comes close to a Manichaeian 'Better Dead than Red' argument: "even the chance of preserving for future generations the framework of free and responsible political action may be preferable to a surrender to tyranny."¹⁰⁸ The Commission felt the atomic question was thus misconceived if attention was focused on the results or ends of war. The true concern was to prevent war:

From this point of view, the important fact is that no effective means has thus far been suggested of deterring a would-be aggressor except the fear of reprisals... the problem with which we have to deal is, at least in principle, not so much the prevention of war in the old sense of a conflict of interests between rival nations,

¹⁰⁶ These rights and responsibilities are however not defined. BCC 1946, p.53.

¹⁰⁷ BCC 1946, p.53.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

as the provision of effective means of police action to restrain a lawless and anti-social member of the community of nations from seeking to attain its ends by violence. In that case the weapon of the atomic bomb ought in the future to be used for one purpose, and one purpose alone, to deter by the threat, and if necessary by the execution, of reprisals a nation which attempted to use it for aggressive purposes. If greatly superior power can be concentrated in the hands of the United Nations, or of a group of nations determined, and for that reason alone, this might be expected to act as a sufficient deterrent and thereby prevent the outbreak of war.¹⁰⁹

The Report was ahead of its time in one important respect -- it advocated the principle of nuclear weapons being used as a deterrent.¹¹⁰

Pacifism and Non-Pacifism

The Commission had no solution to the dilemma between pacifism and the *just war*. The Report believed the Church unable to pronounce between the two alternatives. Each tradition was seen as an expression of loyalty to one side of Christian political responsibility and the Church "must throw the shield of its protection and sympathy over those who make either choice."¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p.53.

¹¹⁰ 'Deterrence' was defined in a later report to mean 'the prevention of hostile action by fear of counter-attack'. See *The Church and the Bomb* 1982, p.176. The idea of deterrence, of course, became a mainstream of British government nuclear policy. The development of such ideas was led by a small group of professional strategists, the most prominent of which was Rear Admiral Sir Anthony Buzzard former Chief of Naval Intelligence and director of Vickers-Armstrong. Buzzard exercised a powerful influence on both the debate in the Churches (Buzzard served on four successive BCC commissions 1959 *Christians and Atomic War*; 1961 *Valley of Decision*; 1963 *The British Nuclear Deterrent*; and the 1973 *Search for Security*) and in government. See Section Three, Chapters Six-Eight of this thesis.

¹¹¹ BCC 1946, p.55.

Christian pacifism was a claim of moral absolutes. It was seen as the instinctive conviction that Christians cannot have a stake in a conflict in which there was no place left for mercy and where the individual counted for nothing. For those who made this choice, the Commission believed, the end of citizenship had come.

Just war theorists or non-pacifists, conversely, were attempting to discharge the political responsibility which through God's providence people owed to the State. For those who made this decision the atomic crisis was seen as the crowning reason why citizenship should be affirmed:

... it is a serious question whether it is right for Christians to weaken the hands of their government by announcing in advance that, if hostilities take place, they will have no part in them. Such an attitude, if adopted on a large scale, might have the effect of encouraging an aggressor and thus of precipitating the catastrophe which it is hoped to avert.... If the supreme object of our endeavours is to save humanity from the appalling fate of atomic warfare, to assume the best means of doing so is to renounce in advance the right of defence might well prove to be a serious political miscalculation.¹¹²

Security considerations were too important for collective Christian dissent. The individual should keep objections to themselves and security should be the concern of the State apparatus alone.

The Era of Atomic Power saw two positive thoughts emerging from the dilemma before it. First, the nature of the atomic question was an overwhelming reason for the Churches to do all

¹¹² Ibid., p.56.

in their power to further any proposal to eliminate weapons of mass destruction from all states (i.e. multilateral disarmament). Second, the crisis was an unavoidable necessity that must be lived with in order to bring people closer to God:

...we believe that to live with the dilemma, refusing the false peace of mind which obviousness to either disturbing alternative might bring, is a necessary discipline through which we must pass in order that the solution may in the providence of God in due time overtake us. Only through such a discipline also can we come to understand the dilemma of our whole society, of which the ambiguities of war are only one expression.¹¹³

It concluded by reminding readers that God had created humanity in order to both discover and transform. Science presented trials and tribulations as well as benefits. Because of this the Churches must confront the nature of science to fulfil its mission in a scientific and technical society. The Report noted: "the true temper and proper employment of a Christian is always to be working like the sea, and purging ignorance out of his understanding and exchanging notions and apprehensions imperfect for more perfect, and forgetting things behind to press forward."¹¹⁴ Paraphrasing Reinhold Niebuhr (who had sat on both US Federal Council Commissions), the Report reminded readers that the humanist movement that began with the Renaissance had a more profound insight into the potential of human existence,

¹¹³ Ibid., p.57.

¹¹⁴ Quotation by A.D. Lindsay, Oxford political theorist and keen contributor to Oldham's *Christian News-Letter*. See p.60 of BCC 1946 Report.

individual and collective, than either Roman Catholicism or Protestantism. What was required was a synthesis between similar secular insights and the Christian world-view. In other words, a Christian (liberal) realism. Such a synthesis would allow the Churches to acknowledge with gratitude the powerful support brought by the scientific community to the defence of those human values which Christians were equally concerned to vindicate. In this way:

The most immediate and urgent question raised by the atomic age... is whether man, as he actually is, can be trusted to use wisely the multiplying powers which science is pouring into his hands.¹¹⁵

At all times Christians must be, however, aware of the wholeness of living and ensure that science did not outstrip moral progress: "life can be redeemed not by more zealous striving after what *ought* to be, but only by finding a new relation to that which *is*."¹¹⁶ Here we see a Platonic cast of mind in that, for the Commission, the Bomb ultimately must be lived with: it could not be ignored or 'disinvented'. A prophetic function on behalf of the Church was therefore unnecessary and unwarranted.

Individual Church's Responses

The May 1946 Council meeting was an eventful one. It resolved to send *The Era of Atomic Power* to all its member Churches, and other associated bodies, and invite official

¹¹⁵ BCC 1946, p.63.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p.65.

consideration. Oldham sent copies to each member Church as well as to the US Federal Council of Churches, the National Council of Churches in New Zealand, the National Christian Council of South Africa, the Australian Section of the WCC, the Canadian Committee for the World Council, and the equivalent national councils in Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, France, Switzerland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Bulgaria, Austria.¹¹⁷

By October 1946 individual Churches had responded to Oldham's Report. The Quakers were amongst the first to respond. A short reply was first published in the 2nd August 1946 copy of *The Friend*¹¹⁸. The Historic Peace Church did not believe the Report was radical enough. They asked "Is the Christian Church really faced with an 'Irresolvable dilemma'?" To the Quakers, God existed in every situation and the BCC had over-emphasised the negative aspects of preventing war. For them there was a clear constructive option to solving the nuclear problem:

The true peacemaker should advocate the destruction of all atomic bombs now, and the discontinuance of experiments and processes for producing them, rather than seek to retain them for possible use on future occasions.... The impression left on our minds after studying the Report is that the complexities of politics have been allowed to cloud moral and spiritual issues.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Letters of introduction and replies in BCC/5/7/2v.

¹¹⁸ A longer version of the Quaker reply was published the 15 November edition of *The Friend*. This version was later published in pamphlet form as *The Era of Atomic Power: Reply to the British Council of Churches from the Society of Friends* 1946. Criticism is taken from this pamphlet.

¹¹⁹ Quakers' Reply 1946, pp.2-3.

At the very least the BCC should have followed the example of the US Federal Council and expressed penitence for the Allied use of the Bomb. The Quakers called on the BCC not to be so dismissive of, but face squarely, the pacifist option.

To develop this last theme the Quakers proposed a conference between the Commission and a equivalent amount of Friends to discuss and face the task together. They believed "...Christ is calling His church to renounce war altogether."¹²⁰ The Friends wanted to publish their reply to the *Era of Atomic Power* in pamphlet form but were prepared to delay publication until the BCC had held a corporate examination of the subject.¹²¹ The Quakers were disappointed that the BCC delayed their examination to the Spring of 1947 and dismissed their request for a bilateral conference. They thus went ahead and published their reply in pamphlet form in November 1946.

The Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, however, commended the BCC for their "sound thought and fearless judgement" and thought it of first importance for the BCC to produce a positive statement on the constructive purposes to which nuclear energy could be applied.¹²² The Presbyterian Church in Ireland was more critical, they found the Report "too deep and too difficult to be of great practical use to the average man. Yet it is practical guidance that is of

¹²⁰ Letter dated 18 September 1946, BCC/5/7/2i.

¹²¹ The series of letters between Oldham and the Quakers, dated the 20 September; 11 October; 17 October; 18 October 1946 is in BCC/5/7/2i.

¹²² Baptist statement dated 2 May 1947, BCC/5/7/2/iv.

vital and immediate importance, if disaster is to be averted."¹²³

The Church and the Atom

The Church of England took their reply to the BCC seriously and aimed to produce the 'other worldly wordiness' which had been called for by the Oldham Commission.¹²⁴ This reply was in the form of a Report of a Commission appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury (Fisher) and York (Garbett) at the request of the Church Assembly and under the chair of the Dean of Winchester (Selwyn).¹²⁵ The Commission was asked to look into the wider moral and theological aspects of atomic war. The Report was completed in 1948 and entitled *The Church and the Atom*.¹²⁶ It is an important contribution to the debate because it came at a time when the Cold War was intensifying

¹²³ Presbyterian Church in Ireland reply, n.d. in BCC/5/7/2iv.

¹²⁴ i.e. a position that ignores neither Christianity's spiritual and moral resources, nor the worldly events which challenge them. See Elford 1985, pp.178 and 180.

¹²⁵ The Enabling Act of 1919 set up this National Assembly (always called the Church Assembly) as the successor to the Representative Church Council. It had three Houses (Bishops, Clergy and Laity). In 1969 the Synodical Government Measure reconstituted the Church Assembly into the present-day General Synod. See Peter Cornwell's "The Church of England and the State: Changing Constitutional Links in Historical Perspective" Moyser (ed.) 1985, pp.33-54; Hastings 1987, pp.252-3; Kent 1992, p.26.

¹²⁶ *The Church and the Atom: A Study of the Moral and Theological Aspects of Peace and War*. Church Assembly, 1948. Wight 1949; Thrall 1972; MacKinnon 1968a; Groom 1974; Elford 1985; and Ormrod 1987 offer reviews. Martin Wight's review for *International Affairs* is interesting because it reinforces the extent to which ecclesiastical thinking was being given a hearing in contemporary IR circles. Donald MacKinnon's "An Approach to the Moral and Spiritual Problems of the Nuclear Age" is a re-print of a BBC Third Programme commentary given in 1948. Elford's essay "The Church and Nuclear Defence Policy" is the most detailed and covers the Report's acceptance debate in the Church Assembly where he notes opinions were evenly divided. Although Groom (1974, pp.196-98) is also detailed care has to be taken when considering it for Groom wrongly suggests that this Church of England publication is in fact a BCC publication.

and confirmed the basic drift of official British Church thinking.

For the Church of England the problem raised by the Bomb was not so much a matter of its effects, but more to do with who possesses its power: "...the Commission believes that the principal challenge confronting the civilisation of our day arises from the rapid growth and concentration of political and technological power in the hands of despotic oligarchies."¹²⁷ Because of this they felt the use of atomic bombs must be judged, in conjunction with any other act of mass-destruction, by the imposition of prior limitation of its aims. In this way "...the properties of the atomic bomb are such as to expose it to the same objections as poison gas and bacteriological weapons."¹²⁸ Whilst the Commission hesitated in defending the use of the Bomb to achieve objectives in inhabited cities, if that objective could not be attained in any other way, "...there is no objection on other grounds than of humanity....in such circumstances the suffering and death caused will not be needless. But in most imaginable situations the charge of inhumanity would lie."¹²⁹ The Bomb, therefore, was not qualitatively different to any other weapon. As Groom points out¹³⁰, such a doctrine was dangerous because a subjective evaluation of such a situation in the 'fog of war' was not likely to err on the side of caution.

¹²⁷ Church Assembly 1948, p.110.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p.111.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p.45.

¹³⁰ Groom 1974, p.197.

This approach was as likely to start a series of reprisals or escalation. Nevertheless, the Commission did uphold the just war principles of discrimination and limitation.

The Report argued that the object of bombing Hiroshima and Nagasaki was, not to destroy, but to administer a 'psychological shock' that would force the end of hostilities. The political importance of the weapon was stressed in the same way the Government, followed by the BCC, had justified the decision to manufacture the Bomb. The Commission generally supported, and logically developed the BCC line, declaring that "today the possession of atomic weapons is generally necessary for national self-preservation, [and] a government which is responsible for the safety of the community committed to its charge, is entitled to manufacture them and hold them in readiness."¹³¹

The Report ended on an optimistic note when it asked Christians to always bear in mind that the problem of peace and preventing war was a spiritual, not political, task. The consequence of this was that Christians had a duty "...which rests upon the Church and individual Christians alike, of bringing the illumination of the Gospel, and the Christian insight into natural law, to the quest for policies which may alleviate, in accordance with reason and justice, the evils

¹³¹ Church Assembly 1948, p.111.

that covetousness and the pursuit of false aims have caused."¹³²

Oldham saw the *Church and Atom* as a good piece of work.¹³³ For him the Church of England developed themes the BCC should have developed. Yet the *Church and Atom* had not been any more successful than the BCC in overcoming the fundamental division between pacifist and just war thinking. It was sympathetic to the BCC's attempt to avoid prophecy. For Oldham the Church of England had succeeded in carrying forward a dialectic: "I think that with the main criticism of our Report, that we treated the dilemma as irresolvable, I am unable to agree. It is all very well to say that the human mind desires serenity. It certainly does, but in some situations it can't have it, and for myself I think that we have just to accept the fact that in the present state of the world there is no clear way out."¹³⁴ Both Reports covered such wide ground, and the issues dealt with so involved and inter-related that they proved not easy to discuss in public. Oldham regarded the recently released Lillenthal Report, and the Baruch¹³⁵ proposals based on it, as "an act of statesmanship of the highest order which is one of the bright spots in the post-war situation."¹³⁶ He

¹³² Ibid., p.112-113.

¹³³ See letter from Oldham to the new BCC General Secretary, David Say, 23rd April 1948, BCC/5/7/2i.

¹³⁴ Letter from Oldham to Say, 23 April 1948, BCC/5/7/2i.

¹³⁵ The first official Western approach to disarmament and arms control. The main thrust of the Baruch proposals were to keep atomic bombs out of the hands of sovereign states by placing them under the supervision of a supranational body. For detail see Noel-Baker 1958; Mandelbaum 1979, pp.23-33; Groom 1974, pp.166-68.

¹³⁶ Letter from Oldham to Say, 23 April 1948, BCC/5/7/2i.

was certain that the problem caused by the dilemma had "ceased to be one of the control of atomic energy and has become absorbed into the larger problem of the relation of Russia and the West."¹³⁷

Towards the end of 1948, Oldham thought the time had come for his Commission to be disbanded. He thought the atomic debate had reached a stage at which things must, at least for the present, be allowed to rest. At the November 1948 meeting of the BCC's Executive Committee an assessment of BCC member Churches replies to the *Era of Atomic Power* was set before the meeting, thereafter the Oldham Commission was formally disbanded.

Conclusion

The extent to which political crisis had shifted the essential optimism behind ecumenical integration into pessimism was particularly apparent in the orthodoxy of the Oldham Commission's exploration, and comment on, the atom bomb. Archbishop Fisher's anti-pacifist hand was decisive in the forming of the Commission and Oldham saw no need to move the Commission in a qualitatively different direction. Oldham believed it was possible to correlate theology with the best available social analysis. Yet by nature he was a observer of rules¹³⁸ content with the rewards of a 'club diplomacy'¹³⁹, and

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Oldham admits this in a letter to Say dated 26 October 1948, BCC/5/7/2i.

¹³⁹ Kent 1992, p.189.

not in favour of Christian social prophecy (à la Bell). To Oldham being 'realistic' meant accepting that war was waged out of 'necessity' and acknowledging that the Churches' function was to respond to the situation as it appeared. Talking about what 'is' and not speculating or advocating action that 'ought to be' was his intention.

The Commission that produced *The Era of Atomic Power* subscribed to a confrontational view of international relations. The authors' were prepared to "live with the atomic dilemma", were against attempts to unilaterally disarm, and concerned themselves with protecting Britain's 'Great Power' status. The result was a strongly anti-pacifist report that supported the idea that Britain should retain the Bomb as a legitimate just war deterrent. This approach, however, was by no means original and mirrored official British State policy.

The Report's understanding of the appropriate Christian response rested on an understanding of 'realistic faith' (realism) coupled with 'responsible citizenship' (faith in the liberal democratic process). To the Commission there was no novel ethical or spiritual implication inherent in atomic power and their approach was a *via media* between a particular moral and political responsibility. They were concerned more with the ends (i.e. the preservation of international order) rather than the means with which Western security concerns were articulated. The basic presuppositions of the

Commission, particularly their decision not to see any qualitative differences in the issues raised by the Bomb, was understood as very Augustinian. The Commission was content to turn to 'middle axioms' and pay attention to the ends rather than the means of policy. This philosophy rested squarely on the categorical imperative that the British State was an acceptable holder of the nuclear means and hence a just, trust-worthy, or legitimate authority. This faith in Western democracy resulted in a refusal to condemn the Bomb's use, or indeed, its continued retention and development.

CHAPTER FIVE:

THE CHURCHES AND THE HYDROGEN BOMB 1950-57

Introduction

From the 22nd August to September 4th 1948 Church leaders from around the world met in Amsterdam, under the auspices of the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches, to try to develop a solution to the dilemma posed by atomic weapons. No definitive answer could be given to the question, 'Could War Still be Just in the Atomic Age?', but it was agreed that "the Churches must continue to hold within their full fellowship" not only those split between Christian pacifist and *just war* arguments, but also embrace "those who hold that, even though entering a war may be a Christian's duty in particular circumstances, modern warfare, with its mass destruction, can never be an act of justice."¹ This so-called 'Nuclear Pacifist Position' of Amsterdam, first enunciated by the US Federal Council of Churches² in 1946, would come to dominate Church discussions in the years to come. Christian attempts to limit war was thus divided three ways. It was split between those who thought war was not morally permissible in any circumstance

¹ Review in Potter 1969, p.113.

² c.f. Chapter Four of this thesis.

(pacifists), those who thought war, even war fought with nuclear weapons, was unavoidable in some circumstances (just war), and finally those who thought war fought with nuclear weapons could never be morally acceptable, yet nevertheless accepted the need to use violence in certain situations if it was waged without the use of nuclear weapons (nuclear pacifist). President Truman's January 1950 announcement that the USA was working on developing a hydrogen (thermonuclear) or super-bomb³ served to exacerbate these divisions and, in particular, spread and develop the 'nuclear pacifist' view throughout Christianity. In the light of such developments, this chapter details: first, the development of Christian thinking towards the developing debate; and second, attitudes to the testing of a British hydrogen bomb in 1954.

Part I: The Debate Develops

The Executive Committee of the WCC meeting at Bosey, near Geneva, on the 21-23 February 1950, re-affirmed the necessity to declare in favour of nuclear pacifism by unanimously condemning: "The hydrogen bomb (as) the latest and most terrible step in the crescendo of warfare which has changed war from a fight between men and nations to a mass murder of human life....All this is a perversion; it is against the moral order by which man is bound; it is sin

³ Mandelbaum 1979; Groom 1974. See The Church of England's 1982 Report, *The Church and the Bomb*, for a sophisticated discussion of the processes and differences between nuclear fission (i.e. the A-bomb) and thermonuclear fusion (i.e. the H-bomb) pp.1-18.

against God."⁴ In July the WCC's Central Committee met in session in Toronto, Canada and called for an international ban on all methods of modern warfare.⁵

The British Council of Churches responded to the WCC Executive Committee statement at its April 20 1950 meeting in Cardiff. While agreeing with the sentiments expressed by the WCC the Council felt unable to go beyond urging "governments to enter into negotiations once again for the control of atomic energy"⁶ in war-like situations. Finding the right policy towards the hydrogen bomb, nevertheless, produced anxious debate in BCC circles. Yet their seven-point policy for joint action in international affairs still suggested that that the meaningful debate for the BCC was still one between *just war* and pacifist approaches. Point III called on all British Christians:

To support H. M. Government and the United Nations in their efforts to uphold the Law of Nations, to resist aggression and to succour its victims. (It is recognised that some, from a no less Christian conviction, cannot support resistance by military action).⁷

Whilst BCC constituent Churches had already passed resolutions and issued their own statements and studies on the morality of war in the nuclear age⁸, official Church

⁴ *Statements on Nuclear Weapons* (Geneva: WCC, 1958), p.1.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *The Churches and the Hydrogen Bomb* (London: BCC n.d. but 1955), p.2.

⁷ *The Churches and the Hydrogen Bomb*, p.1.

⁸ For example *Atomic Energy: Report of the Sub-Committee of the Standing Committee of the Church of Ireland* (December 1946); *Report of Sub-Committee set up by the General Purpose Committee of the Congregational Union of England and Wales and the British Council of Churches Report on the Era of Atomic Power* (January 1947); and the

interest in Britain dramatically increased in 1954. This was for two main reasons: first, on the 5th April 1954 the Conservative government announced it was planning to develop its own independent H-bomb⁹; second, also in April the effects of radiation poisoning caused by the USA's Pacific H-bomb test fall-out on a Japanese fishing boat, *Lucky Dragon*, was revealed.¹⁰

After the Government announced that it was developing a British hydrogen bomb a great number of people began to look to the Churches to say something on the spiritual implications of this dramatic development.¹¹ Most BCC members were aware that the Council had appointed the Oldham Commission in 1946, but they also appreciated in the manner of the 1950 WCC/BCC statements, that British Christians were called upon to respond afresh to the new stage in scientific military development heralded by thermonuclear weapons. There seemed to be at least two factors in the contemporary situation which made it desirable that consideration should be given to the subject or some kind of new statement made. First, there seemed to be new and real danger, not only from the possible use of the H-bomb, but also from experiments with them for scientific purposes. If an unrestricted

previously discussed Church of England study *Church and the Atom* (February 1948).

⁹ The decision was actually not clearly enunciated until the 1955 *Statement on Defence White Paper*.

¹⁰ Cox 1981, pp.39-42.

¹¹ BCC General Secretary David Say began to receive a steady flow of correspondence from members of BCC constituent Churches demanding action. BCC Box 12.

atomic arms race continued it was feared that incalculable forces of destruction would be unleashed, even without a deliberate act of war. Second, many Christians were looking instinctively to the Churches for spiritual comfort, reassurance, and some moral lead in an attempt to break the intellectual dead-lock. As a consequence there were fresh calls for the BCC to appoint another special commission to investigate the moral and spiritual issues raised by recent experiments in the hydrogen bomb.¹² Kenneth Grubb as Chair of the BCC's International Department, however thought the Council should respond by simply adopting some kind of statement at the 27 April 1954 Council meeting.¹³

Grubb argued that the BCC should take a lead from the resolutions recently sponsored by the United Nations Association¹⁴ calling on the leaders of the 'Great Powers' to proceed with an immediate halt in the armaments race and to proceed with world disarmament. He favoured a

¹² For example, the Rev. Dr. N. Davidson (Glasgow Cathedral) conveys this impression to Say. See letter dated 8 April 1954 in BCC Box 12.

¹³ Grubb to Say 27 April 1954, BCC Box 12.

¹⁴ From June 1946 the West had adhered to the same disarmament objectives expressed through the Baruch Plan proposals. These objectives were reiterated in the Anglo-French Memorandum of 1954. Here a Draft Disarmament Treaty was prepared by the UN Disarmament Commission and submitted by it to the UN Security Council, to the UN General Assembly, and to a World Disarmament Conference in Geneva. This treaty advocated (a) the total prohibition of the use and manufacture of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction of every type, together with the conversion of existing stocks of nuclear weapons for peaceful purposes; and (b) major reductions in all armed forces and conventional armaments. In the Disarmament Sub-Committee of the UN (i.e. Britain, the US, the Soviet Union, France, and Canada) Western delegates pressed these objectives until May 1955. The Soviets, however, professed great scepticism about the sincerity of the West in proposing the total abolition of nuclear weapons including existing stocks. The contemporary Labour MP and idealist scholar, Phillip Noel-Baker (1958) provides a comprehensive survey of these proposals.

particularly British lead in these disarmament talks supported by the British Churches. Indeed, Grubb wanted the specific issues raised by the H-bomb subject through the statements adopted by the WCC in February 1950, and the BCC in April 1950, to be acted on in a distinctive fashion. He suggested the Council could do this with a non-controversial approach that both endorsed the resolutions of the United Nations Association, and by reiterating the BCC's "conviction that this tragic sickness of the World will not be permanently cured by the devoted labours and good will of peace-loving statesmen alone. [Because] it has its roots in the sinful nature and in the selfishness of all men and nations. It can only be lastingly healed by the removal of the means of war and of the political, economic and spiritual causes of war, and this involves the return of men to God, Judge of the Nations, ever ready to forgive and renew those who seek His will in humility and truth."¹⁵ At the April Council meeting the following statement was henceforth adopted:

The consciences of men and women have been stirred and shocked by the terrible possibilities revealed by the Hydrogen Bomb experiments, which re-inforce the urgent need for a process of general disarmament. In this human situation, the Churches have a triple task; to call men to repentance; to assure men that God reigns supreme whatever wickedness is planned or wrought; and to witness in daily living to the peace given by God's spirit which nothing can remove or destroy. As a matter of immediate challenge, the Council calls upon all Christian people to pray earnestly for the Conference now in session in Geneva, that under the providence of God, it may relieve the present tensions, secure just

¹⁵ Grubb to Say 27 April 1954, BCC Box 12.

settlements and so open the way to the coming of peace for all nations.¹⁶

The H-bomb Debate Begins

This orthodox policy towards the H-bomb from the BCC was not surprising considering the implicitly pro-hydrogen bomb attitudes aired by significant figures within the British Christian Establishment. The most important of these was expressed by the Anglican hierarchy at the Convocation of Canterbury, meeting at Church House Westminster. On May 11th 1954 the Bishop of Birmingham (Wilson) introduced a resolution¹⁷ to the Assembly seconded by the Dean of Winchester (Selwyn¹⁸). This expressed the view that the existence of the hydrogen bomb was a grievous enlargement of the evil inherent in war but only called on politicians to limit and control armaments and encourage the return of mutual confidence. Bishop Wilson argued that as Convocation was one of the most authoritative voices in the Church, its silence over the H-bomb suggested that the Church of England was so engrossed with domestic affairs that it had no mind on the weightier matters of "national righteousness and international peace." Because the H-bomb now made it possible, for the first time, to destroy all human life the

¹⁶ *The Churches and the Hydrogen Bomb*, pp.3-4.

¹⁷ The Convocation of Canterbury (established 1852) is the most important of the two Synods (the other being York established in 1851) in the Church of England. Resolutions were introduced to the 'joint Synod' by two speakers and then referred to the 'Lower House' (House of Laity) and 'Upper House' (House of Bishops) for consideration. See Moyser (ed.) 1985 for history and detail.

¹⁸ Dr. Selwyn was Chair of the 1948 Church of England Commission which produced *The Church and the Atom*.

Church could not simply avoid the debate. It was for the Bishop theologically true that because the whole of this world was in *statu corruptionis*, Christians could not escape the dilemma of having to choose between the lesser of two evils (i.e. seeking a constructive Christian policy towards the Bomb). The Dean of Winchester supported these *just war* sentiments by declaring unilateral disarmament as neither practicable, nor could the Christian Church ever accepted such a solution. The choice was simple: "The issue should be dealt with at a deeper level -- did they [the Dean asked the Church] regard death as the worst of all evils and would they not prefer to live and die under freedom than live under slavery?"¹⁹

Most of the Anglican hierarchy present felt able to subscribe to such Augustinian reasoning. Canon Lindsey Dewar²⁰ (St. Albans), for example, argued that circumstances might arise in which failure to use the Bomb might result in people having to live under a regime where suffering would be greater than any inflicted by weapons. The Bishop of Winchester (Haigh) agreed: "It might be better to perish than submit to the parody of civilisation which seems to be the alternative presented from the other side of the Iron Curtain"²¹. The Bishop of Southwell (Barry) thought that the H-bomb raised no new question, and the Bishop of Derby

¹⁹ *The Times* 12 May 1954.

²⁰ A 1948 Church of England Commission member.

²¹ *The Times* 12 May 1954.

(Rawlinson) compared it to a hand-grenade. Even these sentiments, however, did not go far enough for some. An amendment demanding the dropping of the clause calling on politicians to seek a reduction in armaments was moved by the Dean of Chichester (Duncan-Jones²²) and supported by the Provost of Portsmouth (Goff). The Dean thought that armaments should not be regarded as a cause of war but rather as an indication of a dangerous situation. The Church, consequently, should steer clear of 'political' entanglements and it was not the business of Convocation to call on politicians to do anything in particular.

There were, however, contrary voices raised. The pacifist Archdeacon of Stoke (Harthill²³) moved an amendment declaring that the use of the Bomb would be a sin, and called on Christians not to co-operate either in its manufacture or use "thereby showing that the Christian faith, unlike Marxian Communism, regards moral law as absolute and not relative to the needs of the State."²⁴ Harthill asserted that 'evil' lay not in the risk of being destroyed by the Bomb, but in that Christians should participate in exterminating others and thereby irretrievably "blacken their souls". Rather, it was preferable to live under even a Stalinist regime than be party to dropping the H-bomb. The Bishop of Exeter

²² Duncan-Jones also served on the 1948 Church of England Commission.

²³ A 1948 Commission server, but unlike the above, Harthill was responsible for the 'minority pacifist note' carried at the end of *The Church and the Atom* 1948, pp.114-18.

²⁴ *The Times* 13 May 1954.

(Mortimer), one of the Church of England's more respected theologians also argued that he could not condone the H-bomb and would have to advise his congregation to follow his lead:

It would be immoral and unchristian if Britain were to use the hydrogen bomb, either offensively or even in retaliation after attack. The bomb is a weapon of indiscriminate destruction, and those who used it would put themselves on a level with those who, in the days of Old Testament history, massacred their enemies and exterminated men, women and children, regarding themselves as doing the will of God. The hydrogen bomb is destructive of God's natural creation. It can have no conceivable moral warrant, and it would be directed against the helpless.²⁵

Nonetheless Geoffrey Fisher, Archbishop of Canterbury and President of Convocation, summed up the mood within the Church of England by declaring the Anglican role as simply to present 'the Christian point of view'. Christians should not be afraid to face human sin whatever the consequences may be. For Fisher this meant that the Church "could not become a negotiating party in the politics of the matter, nor could it identify itself (except in extreme cases) with any particular solution to the problem."²⁶

The Re-assertion of 'Middle Axioms'

The 1954 Church of England Convocation passed the resolution stating that the hydrogen bomb enlarged the evil inherent in war, yet rejected both amendments. The dominant

²⁵ Driver 1964, p.198.

²⁶ Fisher became well known for reiterating this idea of a "Christian point of view". For example in December 1955 the Archbishop told the Royal United Services Institution that over the past ten years the Church had approved of most steps Government had taken. See Driver 1964, p.198.

position was still that the end justifies the means. New bombs could not be outlawed merely by virtue of their destructive potential. In essence the Church of England felt that what was important was to trust Government intention. To bomb a city for strategic purposes was far less repugnant than for Government (or anyone else for that matter) to kill an individual in cold blood without reason. In terms of this chapter the significance of this was, as Groom notes, that "the Church of England did not -- could not -- establish the line between what was permissible in certain circumstance, and what was not permissible."²⁷

Other British Christian leaders strengthened Convocation's adoption of just war reasoning. In a June 1954 sermon at St. Paul's Cathedral, the Archdeacon of London, O.H. Gibbs-Smith, reiterated the argument between Christian pacifism and just war by stating that the New Testament did not condone the pacifism "which would suffer the blotting out of civilisation or the enslavement of whole countries."²⁸ For Gibbs-Smith not only was pacifism a heresy of perfectionism in a world that had not achieved perfectionism, but the existence of unconventional weapons was an enormous deterrent against armed aggression. Rather, the "horrors of the atom" were a "mighty force" on the side of peace and it was "wrong-headed" to deplore the existence of the H-bomb or to be embarrassed by their possession. The

²⁷ Groom 1974, p.198.

²⁸ Sermon reported in *The Times* 7 June 1954.

Archdeacon took refuge in the BCC Oldham, and the 1948 Church of England Reports' theme of the Bomb entailing certain 'responsibilities'. In particular the holding of these weapons constituted the greatest challenge that had ever faced the Western world -- the trusteeship of atomic bombs for the sake of all humanity. Although every effort must be made for the outlawing of *all* weapons of mass destruction, as soon as the international situation made this possible, "there was nothing to be said for unilateral disarmament or unilateral banning of any class of weapon; but gradual world disarmament by mutual agreement was clearly part of the new morality for which we must strive."²⁹ Traditional techniques of diplomacy should be overhauled and "the new science"³⁰ of International Relations" studied. Gibbs-Smith concluded that although all states should eventually move towards the limitation of national sovereignty and the ultimate creation of a world State, it should never be forgotten that it was people -- the "unprincipled and the unconsecrated" in particular -- who were dangerous not bombs.

Such an example of shoring up the Establishment position was applauded by *The Times*. The Leader of 7th June 1954

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ By 1954 the more notable signposts in the development of the discipline (from both sides of the Atlantic) included: Reinhold Niebuhr's *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (1st ed. 1932); E. H. Carr's *Twenty Years Crisis* (1939); Martin Wight's *Power Politics* (1945); Hans Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations* (1st ed. 1948); John Herz's *Political Realism and Political Idealism* (1951); George F. Kennan's *American Diplomacy* (1952); and Herbert Butterfield's *Christianity, Diplomacy, and War* (1953).

argued that the Christian doctrine of war could only apply to unconventional weapons, and that the Archdeacon had made two simple but crucial points. First, that the overwhelming authority of Christian opinion throughout the ages had been *just war*. Second, although Christians cannot avoid the consequences of using atomic weapons, they equally could not escape the consequences of using thermonuclear devices if necessary. Pacifism in the Church was thus only an "eccentric minority" that rested less on the literal interpretation of Scripture than on the perfectionist view that human nature, however depraved, will always respond to the power of defence-less charity. *The Times* believed that the New Testament did not authorise such views: "to try to support it by Christ's refusal to lead his disciples to the establishment of an earthly kingdom is to ignore the fundamental distinction between the role of the Church and that of the State which Christian thought has always emphasised."³¹ This, of course, was the Augustinian crux of the matter. To *The Times*, as to many others, the Church was a institution concerned with 'winning and healing souls.' Physical force -- politics -- by its very nature was unfitted to these ends. The State:

... exists for the purpose of maintaining just order in human affairs, or the nearest approach to such an order as human imperfection makes possible. It is entitled and obliged to use physical force, because human sin makes physical force essential to the attainment of its ends. The functions of these two institutions [Church and State] are complementary but separate. Their

³¹ *The Times* 7 June 1954.

separation, which is unaffected by people belonging to both simultaneously, is essential to Christian teaching.³²

The Times argued that physical force should not be used for either spiritual or aggressive ends, but allowed that it may be a Christian duty to use it for defensive and temporal purposes "so long as no more of it is employed than... strictly necessary."³³ The writer seemed unaware that his *just war* position was dangerously close to suggesting the end justified the means used whilst ignoring the principal of proportionality, despite his avowed intentions:

Here the point to be emphasised is that the fundamental distinctions are of kind and of intention rather than of degree. The new bombs cannot be outlawed merely by virtue of their devastating power. The shooting of one man in cold blood, as part of a campaign of terror, is far more repugnant to the Christian mind, both in respect of its corrupting effect and of the attitude to human life which it reflects than the destruction of a city for strategic purposes.³⁴

For *The Times* what was needed was that Christians not shrink from their 'responsibilities'. Such responsibilities started from the premises as laid out by Augustine and followed by the Archdeacon in his sermon: "it is a task which calls for patience and realism as well as faith."

Such sentiments serve well to illustrate the gulf between conflicting definitions of the Gospel and interpretations of Christian responsibility. For conservatives the response to nuclear weapons was dictated, even ordained, by a necessarily close partnership between Church and State

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

within the *civitas terrena*. Although *The Times* presented the functions of the Church and State as complementary, they were also separated and distinct in true pluralist fashion. The State being temporal, the Church spiritual. This view saw the State as existing 'to maintain a just order' and defined the Church's natural role to legitimise such patterns of 'justice'. In effect such distinctions between Church and State appear based on a conservative theology that rested on particular presuppositions of Christian responsibility. The 'objective reality' and 'realism' spoken of were simply distinctive (subjective) 'ideological' constructions. To dissenters such as the WCC, with their different (i.e. global as opposed to national) constituencies, Christian social life was a totality not to be compartmentalised.

The WCC and Bishop Bell

Although the BCC had expressed its concern with its April 1954 statement it was left to the World Council of Churches Second Assembly held at Evanston, Illinois, in August 1954 to challenge the idea of a nuclear *just war* with its theme 'Christ, the Hope of the World'.³⁵

³⁵ See extracts from the Report of Section 4 on *The Struggle for World Community* at the Second Assembly of the WCC; and *Statements on Nuclear Weapons*, pp.2-4 WCC 1958. Also *The Churches and the Hydrogen Bomb*, pp.4-6. Discussed by Vincent 1962, p.88; and Ormrod 1987, p.199. Hastings argues (1987, p.459) that the WCC at Evanston succumbed to a "partisan note of Cold War anti-communism". This sentiment, however, is not self-evident in these anti-nuclear declarations.

This lengthy Report called for a pledge from all states to refrain from the threat or the use of hydrogen, atomic and all other weapons of mass destruction. In particular the WCC saw the development of the H-bomb as creating "an age of fear". For them true peace could not rest on fear and "It [was] vain to think the hydrogen bomb or its development has guaranteed peace because men will be afraid to go to war, nor can fear provide an effective restraint against the temptation to use such a decisive weapon either in hope of total victory or in the desperation of total defeat."³⁶ The foremost responsibility of the Christian Church in the face of this "new moral challenge" was undoubtedly to bring the transforming power of Jesus Christ to bear on the hearts of a common humanity. Christians must pray more fervently for peace, repent more earnestly of their individual and collective failures to further world order, and strive more urgently to establish world contacts for reconciliation, fellowship and love. Lofty objectives, so often invented to justify war, could not conceal the truth that war, violence and destruction were inherently evil. Christians must not lend themselves to, but expose, this deceit.³⁷ It was, however, not enough for the Churches just to proclaim war as evil. The Christian approaches to peace, both pacifist and just war, must be studied afresh in order to "seek out, analyse, and help remove the

³⁶ WCC 1958, p.2.

³⁷ Ibid.

psychological and social, the political and economic causes of war."³⁸ If nuclear catastrophe was to be avoided, the World Council suggested, all Christians must give their energies to securing two conditions of crucial importance. These were:

- (1) The prohibition of all weapons of mass destruction; including atomic and hydrogen bombs, with provision for international inspection and control, such as would safeguard the security of all nations, together with the drastic reduction of all other armaments.
- (2) The certain assurance that no country will engage in or support aggressive or subversive acts in other countries.³⁹

In January 1955 Bishop Bell of Chichester wrote to *The Times*⁴⁰ endorsing the WCC line and calling on Christians to escape *just war* logic by seeing thermonuclear weapons as a dramatic socio-moral issue that could end human history.

Bell understood that H-bombs caused destruction out of proportion to any possible end desired, and could not be justified even in retaliation. He wrote:

H-bombs are morally indefensible because they (1) inflict destruction...altogether out of proportion to the end desired...; (2) are incapable of discriminating between military targets and centres of population; and (3) radiation fall-out would diffuse such poison that (paraphrasing Bertrand Russell) a war with hydrogen bombs might quite possibly put an end to the human race.⁴¹

The true significance of the hydrogen bomb lay, Bell argued, not in a choice between thermonuclear or nuclear devices. Rather, it had become a choice between weapons used

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., p.3.

⁴⁰ *The Times*, 17 January 1955.

⁴¹ Ibid.

primarily for offensive purposes, and between those that could be used tactically to repel aggression. He called on the US President and British Prime Ministers to prohibit all nuclear weapons. If prohibition was not possible at least the West should renounce testing and pledge never to be the first to use the bomb.

In response to Bell's appeal other British Christians began to call on the BCC to toughen their resolve. The Rev. Dale wrote to the BCC's General Secretary (David Say) enclosing his concerns in a pamphlet entitled *Wanted A Church that Offends*. Here he called on the BCC to take a stand against the H-bomb because 'Christian expediency' was leading to moral and political disintegration. For Dale the thermonuclear invention brought two issues to the fore. First, that the power of the State was such that it had become a stultifying factor and a menace. As a result, it was unthinkable that any political party could now seriously challenge State policy. Second, following this awareness, responsibility lay with the Church to reinvigorate its life and democratic witness by restoring a spiritual awareness of the worth of humanity. Dale saw the Christian Church, as personified by the BCC, on trial in a way and to a degree it had not been before. It must rise to the challenge because all too often the Church had spoken either not at all, or with such an uncertain voice, that it had failed to carry conviction. Indeed:

Much of the Church's weakness is due to its hands being tied -- by an all too willing subservience to the will and behest of the State and the secular interests it seeks to serve. As a consequence it is powerless to speak that decisive word mankind is waiting to hear. So afraid is it of giving offence, or of appearing to support unpopular views, or of endangering its own security, it refuses to raise its voice in condemnation of what it admits is in complete contradiction to the faith it claims to hold. But surely our Christian faith is not to wait until others pledge themselves to refrain from evil. The Church's task is not to follow, but to lead; not to be guided by the standards that commonly govern human conduct, but to set before men's eyes those ideals of divine righteousness in obedience to which alone true peace, happiness and good can be achieved. It is a cause of deep regret that at the present juncture of world events, the Church is largely under the domination of a sycophantic leadership that for fear of imperilling its own status and security is more concerned with safeguarding its self-interest than with declaring the counsel of God.⁴²

The problem, as Dale saw it, went back to Augustinian accommodation in the fourth century. This act from which the Christian faith has suffered disastrous consequences ever since had meant that, for the most part the Church throughout the world approved and justified the policies being pursued by their respective governments. In the contemporary setting this subservience had resulted in colossal rearmament proceeding with such momentum. And the Church, even within an ecumenical setting, had grievously failed in the trust committed to it. To Dale the logical way of redressing this situation must be that:

The Christian's primary concern can never be with the advancement of worldly interests, still less with the support of policies that are wholly at variance with the spirit of the Gospel....The Church's first loyalty is not to a crown, or to an empire, or to a flag. To Jesus Christ and Him alone it owes its allegiance. All

⁴² Dale's *Wanted a Church that Offends*, n.d. p.2. BCC Box 12.

other authority is secondary and relative. Christian citizenship is in heaven. The apostolic injunction still holds: 'We must obey God rather than men'.⁴³

Say responded defensively to Dale's call for a Christian democratic renewal.⁴⁴ The General Secretary reminded him that more than once statements had been issued, in addition to the BCC being the first body⁴⁵ to have published a Report in the 'Era of Atomic Power.'

At their annual meeting in Northampton the Federal Council of Free Churches⁴⁶ supported the sentiments suggested by the WCC, Bishop Bell, and the Rev. Dale. It passed an anti-nuclear resolution calling for the prohibition of all weapons of mass destruction including the hydrogen and atom bombs and for a drastic reduction in all other armaments. The Council urged the Government to spare no effort in securing a fruitful outcome from disarmament conferences. Several delegates felt the Federal Council had even then not gone far enough with its distinctive non-pacifist tone. Referring to the country's moral atmosphere the Moderator of the Council, the Rev. F.P. Copland Simmons, concluded by suggesting England was favourable for a "great combined attack on the citadel of indifference."⁴⁷

⁴³ Ibid., p.4.

⁴⁴ Say's reply to Dale, 28 February 1955, BCC Box 12.

⁴⁵ Say omits to mention the US Federal Council Report that preceded the BCC Report by several months.

⁴⁶ The Free Church Federal Council (a constituent assembly of the BCC) represented 23,000 churches in March 1955, compared to, for example, the 17,000 churches in the Church of England. Source: *The Times*, 24 March 1955.

⁴⁷ *The Times* 24 March 1955.

The Archbishop of York

The high Tory Archbishop of York (Garbett)⁴⁸, meanwhile, felt sufficiently perturbed by the omission of any reference to the hydrogen bomb in the Queen's Speech to raise the matter in the House of Lords.⁴⁹ Garbett who had rebutted those 'Manichaeans' with their rigid, black-and-white concept of a necessary war of ideology between East and Western values,⁵⁰ now saw the international control of nuclear weapons as the most urgent immediate problem. At this stage Garbett had little faith in those who said that nuclear weapons were so terrible that they were a deterrent to war, and it was unlikely that they will ever be used. With a implicit swipe at both the 1946 BCC Oldham and the 1948 Church of England Reports, the Archbishop stated that those who hold the optimistic deterrent view were failing to appreciate "the intensity of the hatred which may obsess a nation, and when hatred and fear are combined a nation in danger of defeat which possessed these bombs would, almost inevitably use them."⁵¹ He opposed the 'realism' as

⁴⁸ Margaret Thrall (1972, p.418-19) considers Archbishop Garbett's views in some detail and concludes that he was one leading cleric who stands out for his strenuous attempts to ensure that the British Government was doing something about the control of atomic weapons. Thrall notes that Garbett was in fact the first figure from within British Church circles to adumbrate the idea that the West should renounce the first use of nuclear weapons in any future conflict. Archbishop Garbett made this point in March 1950, and in December of the same year Bishop Bell of Chichester gave his support to it.

⁴⁹ Archbishop of York, *Hansard: House of Lords*, vol.190, col.64, 1 December 1954.

⁵⁰ For instance, *The Times* editorial 28 February 1953.

⁵¹ Archbishop of York, *Hansard: House of Lords*, vol.190, col.64, 1 December 1954.

exemplified by the Reports and argued that nuclear weapons had a very negligible deterrent value.

Less than four months after these comments, however, the Archbishop changed his views during the March 1955 House of Lords debate on the British decision to build the hydrogen bomb.⁵² Garbett opened by acknowledging that his daily letters and petitions were testimony to the intensity of public reaction. Although he detested these "hateful" weapons as much as anyone, he had regrettably, been forced to question his earlier position. To the Archbishop, protests and petitions against nuclear weapons would not influence those who decided whether the Bomb be used or not. No matter how many sermons are preached, or how many MPs are against nuclear weapons, the Soviet Union "would continue on their chosen path, regardless of remonstrance's and reckless of human life."⁵³ In other words the decision as to whether the Bomb be used or not did not rest with Britain, or the democratic West alone. The Archbishop went on to offer two arguments to counter the view that Britain should unilaterally renounce the Bomb. First Garbett questioned the unilateralists' argument of expediency -- namely if Britain renounced the H-bomb she would remain unharmed as a neutral. The Archbishop felt such an argument could not be taken seriously. It would be more likely that the UK would be destroyed by the Soviet Union or occupied by the US in

⁵² Archbishop's speech in *Hansard: House of Lords*, vol.191, col.1148, 16 March 1955.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

case the Soviets tried to use Britain as a base from which to launch attacks on the USA. In either scenario without the H-bomb "the United Kingdom would soon become a defenceless satellite of one of those two great Powers, fearful of incurring the displeasure of either."⁵⁴

Garbett's second retort, against the argument that on principle Britain should renounce the bomb was he confessed, a much more problematic one. The Archbishop found he had to ask himself whether:

...it would be better for the nation to die, rather than to save itself by wholesale destruction of its enemies. I will not hide from your Lordships that I feel tremendously the force of this appeal. It is an argument which must appeal to every Christian and make an agonising challenge to conscience.⁵⁵

He could nevertheless not support this approach, however personally attractive, because he felt that no Government could adopt such a position without overwhelming public support. This, to the Archbishop, was not practicable because in his opinion "all sections of the public" accepted the idea of a deterrent. The chief justification for making the Bomb must be, henceforth, that it will provide a shield beneath which the work of peace-making can be continued. From the pulpit of York Minster, he continued to add weight to the pro-nuclear lobby through his 'warnings' of the danger of concealing from 'ourselves' the awful responsibility of the consequences of the Bomb.⁵⁶ Garbett

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Reported by *The Times* 18 April 1955.

argued that to use the H-bomb for destructive (as opposed to defensive) purposes would be a great sin: the Christian should resolutely refuse to believe that its use was inevitable whilst seeking to conquer the sins which might lead to its use. Through such sentiments it was painfully obvious that the British Churches generally condoned (particularly by their silence) the decision to manufacture the H-bomb.

Responses to the Archbishop

Although the Archbishop of York was widely applauded from both within the Churches and Government for his powerful support of the decision to manufacture the hydrogen bomb, his recourse to *just war* theory was bitterly attacked. Critics included the Methodist Dr. Donald Soper who wrote in *The Times*⁵⁷:

The Archbishop's honest and, as he avers, his agonised wrestling with his own conscience will evoke general respect....All the same he is dead wrong....he regards the possession of hydrogen bombs by this country as a shield (sic) behind which peace-making may go on and without which disaster is unavoidable....Dr. Garbett has got his facts wrong and his ethics wrong, and on reflection many...will come to think that if Christianity has nothing more creative than this to say it has no worth-while contribution to make.⁵⁸

Yet the Archbishop of Canterbury supported his deputy. In March 1955 Fisher went on record to say that as the Bomb "purchased time for peace" it must be manufactured by the

⁵⁷ Dr. Soper's letter to *The Times* 25 March 1955.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

British for deterrent purposes.⁵⁹ In his Easter Day address he developed this theme.⁶⁰

Fisher preached on the H-bomb and the Christian duty to strive to bring about the change of heart and mind that would establish peace. He believed that the hydrogen bomb did not differ in principle from the atom bomb which preceded it, or the cobalt bomb, "or any other worse horror which may succeed it". Weapons made war more hideous but not (and crucially in terms of the Church debate) more evil:

The Christian must regard this hateful thing without any illusion born of fear or despair. The first duty of the Church and of Christians is to remain unshaken in the hope that fails not,...To abolish the bomb you must agree with others, and others with you,...It is for Christians and Christian Statesmen to bear the burden...(of the Bomb) and still to be peace-seekers and peace makers. The task is bedevilled by past failures and present collisions dividing the world that we can only expect progress to be by 'here a little and there a little'.⁶¹

Such a speech is almost as interesting for what it suggests but doesn't say, as it is for what it actually does say. On a theological level, the sermon implied that no matter whether there is a nuclear war or not the Christian should remain unshaken in the belief that a better after-life exists. Concerns of this life are only temporary, and not as significant as the after-life. On the political level, Fisher warned against unilateral disarmament yet used his moral weight to advocate (the far less costly option) multilateralism. The sermon condoned the Bomb, as long as

⁵⁹ *The Times* 25 March 1955.

⁶⁰ *The Times* 19 April 1955.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

it was in Christian (i.e. non-Soviet atheist) hands, and almost gratefully accepted the burden of responsibility on behalf of 'others'. Finally, the Archbishop says much about his fatalistic, deterministic, and incremental attitude to change. The Bomb, as presumably life in general, does not warrant revolutionary measures.

Part II: The Churches and Testing

In August 1955 the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Davos Switzerland, unanimously adopted a *Statement on Disarmament and Peaceful Change*⁶² endorsed by their Commission of the Churches on International Affairs. Kenneth Grubb's CCIA were having increasing success at advancing the thesis that the best way to tackle the nuclear dilemma was to consider moral and political factors in tandem with a mathematical and mechanical approach to the reduction of armaments. For the CCIA these factors applied to two indispensable and complementary processes: first, the process whereby all armaments were progressively reduced under adequate international inspection and control; and second, the process of developing and securing international acceptance of methods for peaceful settlement and change to rectify existing injustices, particularly in situations where military conflict has arisen. These complementary approaches depended upon the extent to which mutual

⁶² See copy of statement in WCC 1958, pp.4-7.

confidence could be attained. They encouraged the willingness of representatives of governments to talk in the hope of expanding the area of agreement through the United Nations Disarmament Commission established in 1951. This two-fold approach was the only way the necessary weight could be given to the moral and political factors which were essential ingredients to peace with justice and freedom.

In July 1956 the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, Executive Committee, met at Herrenalb, Germany and issued a more comprehensive addendum.⁶³ The CCIA urged that experimental tests of nuclear weapons should be discontinued under international agreement. The Committee, however, questioned whether the unilateral abandoning of tests would serve peace and security. The CCIA followed the argument that unilateral action may well disrupt the balance of power "which at present offers a safeguard against war and is the principal means to order among the nations."⁶⁴ What was necessary was for all parties to cease testing under an agreed formula of cessation, control, and inspection. The Churches' role in such a situation was to:

...at all times support measures which will facilitate progress towards disarmament such as exchange of persons and the communications of ideas across national frontiers,...both internationally and in their several countries, [they] must challenge governments to shape their policies in accordance with the demands of moral

⁶³ The July 1956 CCIA Executive Committee can be found in WCC 1958, pp.7-8.

⁶⁴ WCC 1958, p.7.

authority rather than those of a mere pragmatic expediency.⁶⁵

A month later in Hungary, the Central Committee of the WCC added their weight to the CCIA's call. This statement⁶⁶ called upon the Churches to appeal to their governments and the United Nations to negotiate an agreement for the discontinuance, or limitation and control, of testing to safeguard the health of the people and the security of states. The Central Committee urged people to make the sacrifices necessary to move away from "cold war" to "real peace".

In the light of these developments and the H-bomb debate in Parliament, the BCC International Department met⁶⁷ to consider whether it was called upon to prepare a statement for consideration by Council. The DIA concluded that:

...any further statement or formal resolution by the Council would surely add little to the solemn words which have been pronounced by leaders of Church and State and might even detract from their gravity. When all has been said that can be said, the Christian man or woman must settle his own attitude before God, bearing in mind that he is not to fear them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul. 'Rather fear him, which is able to destroy soul and body in hell.'⁶⁸

This second official BCC statement repeated the argument that to oppose the H-bomb was a matter for individual, not collective conscience, 'before God'.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.8.

⁶⁶ The statement of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, meeting at Galyateto, Hungary is found on pp.8-9 of WCC 1958.

⁶⁷ The Department met on the 19 April 1955. The statement drafted by the Department for consideration by Council was entitled: *The Hydrogen Bomb and Nuclear Fission*, BCC n.d. but 1955. See BCC Box 12.

⁶⁸ *The Hydrogen Bomb and Nuclear Fission*, p.6.

Despite these attitudes, individual members of the BCC were beginning regularly to pass resolutions that viewed with deep concern the British Government's decision to manufacture thermonuclear weapons.⁶⁹ Not only were people thinking it was their Christian duty to speak out against the H-bomb but specific, localised protests against the British H-bomb were taking shape.

Canon Collins, for instance, rejected the manufacture of the hydrogen bomb from St. Paul's pulpit in early January 1956. He argued that there were certain things a Christian could not stand for and the manufacture of hydrogen bombs was one of them. For Collins it was inconceivable how any member of the Church, the Archbishop of Canterbury included, could suppose that the making and testing of atom or hydrogen bombs was consistent with the Gospel: "Yet, led by the majority of our Church authorities, we Christians are so feeble that we find ourselves accepting such things as consistent with our Christian convictions."⁷⁰ The prominent Christian Socialist Canon Stanley Evans, likewise described the failure of the Church of England to make a stand against nuclear weapons as "a paralysis which is gripping contemporary Christian morality and as an abdication of the Church's right to moral leadership."⁷¹

⁶⁹ For example Loughton Union Church passed a resolution on the 13 April 1955 expressing their concern. Copies of this resolution were sent to the Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Winston Churchill. Resolution in BCC Box 12.

⁷⁰ *The Times*, 2 January 1956.

⁷¹ Quoted by Ormrod 1987, p.189.

In March 1957 Britain's Free Church Federal Council, a constituent Assembly of the BCC, urged the end of hydrogen bomb tests. The Free Church Council further called upon the Government to abandon the forth-coming H-bomb tests on Christmas Island in May, and demanded that research be devoted to peaceful usage of nuclear energy.⁷² Letters were now regularly being sent by the public demanding BCC support and action against the Government plans for H-bomb testing.⁷³

In March 1957 the BCC received an invitation from the National Christian Council of Japan to join in agitation against the nuclear tests. Bishop Bell, in particular, saw the necessity of the BCC giving its utmost support to the Japanese bearing in mind: first, Nagasaki and Hiroshima; second, the radiation poisoning suffered by the crew of the *Lucky Dragon* after the US H-bomb test; and third, the constant nuclear experiments in the Pacific Ocean.⁷⁴ Bell

⁷² *The Times*, 28 March 1957.

⁷³ For example Mary Bubb from Oxford, wrote to Slack on the 22 March 1957, appalled by the absence of moral guidance from the main religious bodies, believing the tests could still be stopped she pleaded with the BCC to speak up. A letter from Hull and District Council of Churches (associated to the BCC) Executive Committee, 23 March 1957, asked what action the BCC had taken, if any, and what action Council proposed taking to try to stop the British tests in the Pacific in May 1957. A postcard received from the Bristol Diocesan Youth Chaplain (Bernard Brown) dated 28 March 1957, asked what the BCC was doing about the new H-bomb tests: "In view of the recently released facts about the radiation already caused, is there any hope of the Church making effective protest?". All letters dated March 1957 in Box 14.

⁷⁴ Besides the atomic bombing of Japan, Britain had exploded its first A-bomb (October 1952), the US its first H-bomb (November 1952), and Britain was preparing to drop its first H-bomb (May 1957) in the Pacific region. Norman Dombey and Eric Grove convincingly argue that the British tests on May 15 and 31 were actually a thermonuclear bluff. In a detailed technical argument they suggest that these British explosions were actually based on 'boosted fission designs' and not on the fusion process. They conclude that the tests had as much to do with public relations, especially relations with the US, as with constructing an

thought "it would be a terrible pity if the BCC were to appear as though they were just apologists for the British Government.... Not only the Japanese, but the other Churches in Asia will be looking very closely at what the BCC says: for it is a real challenge."⁷⁵ The Japanese had resolved⁷⁶ to call upon all world Christian agencies to "create public opinion in all countries concerned for the discontinuance of such experiments." A Japanese Council against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs was in the process of being set up⁷⁷ and the Japanese wanted to invite a BCC representative to a World Conference against A and H-bombs to be held in Tokyo in August. The specific problems of radioactive contamination or of international law, plus general issues on atomic weapons and disarmament, were to be discussed here. Bishop Bell and Dr. Pitt-Watson⁷⁸ shared in discussions that led to the Japanese request being favourably received by Council.⁷⁹

In the face of these events a sense developed⁸⁰ in which it was felt that the Council should go much further than it had gone before. Although BCC officials were primarily concerned about getting out of touch with their

authentic hydrogen bomb. If so the deception was remarkably successful. See Dombey and Grove, 1992.

⁷⁵ Bell to Slack, 27 March 1957.

⁷⁶ Resolution passed by the Japanese Council at its Annual Meeting in Tokyo March 5-6 1957, requesting the cessation of atom and hydrogen bomb (remembering HMG's tests on Christmas Island) experiments. Letter to Bell from Dr. Michio Kozaki, Chair of Japanese Council, details this. Bell repeats Kozaki's message to Slack in a letter dated 21 March 1957, BCC/DIA/1/1/4.

⁷⁷ See letter dated 25 May 1957, Box 14.

⁷⁸ Church of Scotland, see Chapter Four.

⁷⁹ See Payne 1972, p.18.

⁸⁰ This sense is conveyed in a letter from Lawrence (*Christian News-Letter*) to Slack 20 March 1957, BCC/DIA/1/1/4.

constituency, it was now fairly clear that every test explosion that was carried out increased the hazard to the health or heredity of humanity (though it was uncertain how great the risk was). A pat response would be unsatisfactory. Thanks to such pressure in April 1957 the BCC Assembly took the unexpected step of opposing the H-bomb tests.

Bishop Bell's Bill

At the 2-3 April 1957 BCC Assembly meeting Bishop Bell, seconded by Dr. John Pitt-Watson, moved a Private Member's Resolution.⁸¹ The event was significant and controversial. It declared:

The British Council of Churches

- (i) records the profound concern felt by Christian people in Britain at the continuing experimental explosions of nuclear weapons, and at the grave danger which they may involve, by the increase of world radiation, for humanity as a whole;
- (ii) deplores the decision of Her Majesty's Government to carry out a number of nuclear test explosions, in the megaton range, in the near future;
- (iii) appeals to Her Majesty's Government, and to the Governments of the USA and the USSR, to make a new and determined effort to secure a general nuclear control agreement as soon as possible, and in the meantime jointly to pledge themselves from any further tests of hydrogen bombs.⁸²

Although Groom believed that the BCC "deplored the tests"⁸³ this is not borne out in the closeness of the vote (39 to 32).⁸⁴ In the circumstances the International Department

⁸¹ i.e. not an official DIA move, c.f. Chapter Three.

⁸² Resolution in supplement to *The Churches and the Hydrogen Bomb*, n.d. but 1955.

⁸³ Groom 1974, p.201.

⁸⁴ Voting was by individual's sitting in Assembly and not by Church representation.

regretted that this resolution was passed by the Council without remitting the subject to the Department first.⁸⁵ What is perhaps more significant is that the BCC voted against the advice of their President⁸⁶, the Archbishop of Canterbury. Ormrod describes this act as representing the peak of official church opposition up to the formation of CND in 1958.⁸⁷ Driver saw the BCC Spring vote as a political 'weathercock' with which to judge the gale blowing in favour of anti-nuclear opinion.⁸⁸ Groom concluded it was merely an exception to the "embarrassed silence."⁸⁹ The closeness of the vote and correspondence received by the BCC may tell a different story.

The vote at once revealed a considerable division of opinion in the Council and some⁹⁰ doubted whether it was wise to advertise such division to the world. Others felt, as the socially progressive Bishop of Sheffield (Hunter) expressed it, that it was good to let it be known that the BCC thought deeply and cared much about this terrible matter.⁹¹ Although some members supported the BCC resolution⁹² most were surprised and rather shocked to hear

⁸⁵ This sense is conveyed by Keighley in a letter to Anthony Buzzard, 2 October 1957, Box 14.

⁸⁶ Ormrod 1987, p.198 wrongly believes the Archbishop was the chair of the BCC. The Archbishop was in fact the President of the BCC.

⁸⁷ Ormrod 1987, p.199.

⁸⁸ Driver 1964, p.34.

⁸⁹ Groom 1974, p.327.

⁹⁰ Slack, for one, expressed this sentiment in a letter to Father Guardian of the "Society of St. Francis" 11 April 1957, BCC/DIA/1/1/4.

⁹¹ Slack reports this in the above letter.

⁹² For example, a letter from Colchester Council of Churches to Slack dated 5 April 1957, gave their unanimous support for the BCC resolution. But this is an exception to a general rule. See letters in Box 14.

that the voting on the resolution was so close.⁹³ Some bristled with anger, fear, and indignation.⁹⁴

BCC constituent Churches were also busy passing resolutions expressing their alarm that the BCC should be so divided on the question of hydrogen bomb testing. Whilst many were grateful that 39 members voted in favour of discontinuing the tests, some British Christians were convinced that untold harm had been done to the Church by the action of the 32 members of the Council who voted in favour of their continuation. Appeals were sent to the Council to review the position so that in "the name of the Prince of Peace we can give a lead to mankind to renounce what could easily destroy civilisation if allowed to continue."⁹⁵

BCC Relationships with the Wider Peace Movement

In 1954 Canon Collins' Christian Action discussed the movement's role in the anti-nuclear debate but decided to limit their energies to trying to persuade the Churches to treat the matter as one for serious and urgent consideration. An abortive attempt was made to create a national campaign against the H-bomb. Sponsored by a group of Labour MPs including Fenner Brockway and Tony Benn, Canon Collins, Dr. Soper, and a collection of local pacifist groups, Christians and humanitarians came together to form

⁹³ For example Gerald Butt to Slack, 8 April 1957, Box 14.

⁹⁴ e.g. Mary Bubb to Slack, 16 April 1957, Box 14.

⁹⁵ Resolution passed by Cefn Mawr Methodist Circuit 15 April 1957, Box 14.

the Hydrogen Bomb National Campaign.⁹⁶ Although the group only lasted a short while it served as an important precursor for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in 1958. Collins withdrew his support from the Hydrogen Bomb National Campaign a few days after its inaugural Albert Hall rally of 30 April 1954. Although his decision upset many people, for Collins the campaign was inappropriately timed. In effect the campaign was before its time. Collins cites three catalysts that were to make later peace movements successful. First, the Suez crisis of 1956 increased activism. Suez challenged both Government legitimacy and the British public's perception of Britain's 'Great Power' status. Second, the successful British H-bomb test on Christmas Island that encouraged wide spread anti-nuclear participation. Finally, the crisis within the Labour Party in 1955 -- when Aneurin Bevan challenged his own leader in a defence debate and was threatened with expulsion from the party, and Sir Richard Acland (an Anglican radical) resigned his Gravesend seat with a view to fighting a by-election on the H-bomb issue. These three events, more than anything else, made people ready to respond positively to anti-nuclear movements.⁹⁷

Besides Bell's Private Member's Bill, the Free Church Federal Council, the UN Association, the Labour Party, the

⁹⁶ Driver 1964; Duff 1971; Groom 1974; Taylor 1988; Taylor and Pritchard 1980; and Taylor and Young (eds.) 1987; and Veldman 1994 all give detail on these early protest movements and suggestions why they failed to fire public imagination.

⁹⁷ Collins 1966, p.395.

Liberal Party, and the Quakers were just some of the organisations that called on the Government to abandon or suspend tests. BCC attitudes remained divided throughout the period.

From 1955 small groups of both absolute and nuclear pacifists had been organising themselves into local groups. These 'Peace Groups' looked to the BCC for encouragement, co-operation and began asking in what ways the Churches were taking a stand on specific matters such as the H-bomb.⁹⁸ The British Council of Churches responded by producing a collection of BCC/WCC statements and resolutions in a pamphlet (*"The Churches and the Hydrogen Bomb"*) in September 1955.

Specific requests for help were now "flooding in"⁹⁹ to the BCC. The General Secretary of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FoR), Max Parker, wrote to the new BCC General Secretary Kenneth Slack,¹⁰⁰ recording gratitude for the lead taken by the BCC in its decision regarding the H-bomb tests.¹⁰¹ The FoR felt able to continue to support such Christian leadership and were sure only good would result from the stand that the BCC had taken. Slack, however, did

⁹⁸ For example see letter received from Bristol Peace Council dated 15 September 1955, Box 14.

⁹⁹ This phrase is used in a letter from Lambeth Palace to Slack, 17 April 1957, Box 14.

¹⁰⁰ David Say had retired as BCC General Secretary after seven years service. He would later become Bishop of Rochester. Say's replacement Kenneth Slack, was previously Minister of St. James's Presbyterian Church, Edgware. He became Say's successor on 6 June 1955. Slack would serve as General Secretary until 1965, when he became Moderator of the United Reformed Church.

¹⁰¹ Parker to Slack, 6 May 1957, Box 14.

not want the BCC to be so closely associated with such a pacifist organisation.

One of the more organised approaches against the British H-bomb tests had come from the Golders Green Co-operative Women's Guild led by Gertrude Fishwick, ex-suffragette and member of the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship. In February 1957 this small band of radicals had set up the National Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons Tests (NCANWT).¹⁰² This body soon attracted support and sponsorship from Bishop Bell, the Rev. George Macloed, and Dr. Soper. When NCANWT began to gain considerable support people like Canon Collins felt it was time to organise a national campaign for unilateral nuclear disarmament.¹⁰³

Arthur Goss the Chair of NCANWT, wrote to Secretary Slack¹⁰⁴ requesting BCC support. Whilst Goss regretted the failure to stop the British H-bomb tests in May he wanted to know whether the BCC: first, supported an international agreement to end all further tests; second, whether the BCC would join the NCANWT and other like-minded organisations in united action, such as world wide protest to the 'Five Powers' represented on the UN disarmament commission. Slack replied that the BCC did not support the work of

¹⁰² For detail see Taylor's 1983 PhD, pp.28-58.

¹⁰³ Collins states (Collins 1966, pp.295-96) that he was disappointed when the Council of Christian Action decided against what he personally saw as this organisation's proper role. Ormrod (1987, p.206) however, believes that Collins in fact refused to allow Christian Action to be used for this purpose. It is not clear whether this is a simple mistake (e.g. like Ormrod thinking the Archbishop of Canterbury was Chair of the BCC) on Ormrod's behalf or whether Ormrod is disagreeing with Collins' own account.

¹⁰⁴ Goss to Slack, 7 August 1957, Box 14.

organisations like NCANWT, and had only passed one resolution.¹⁰⁵

The officers of the International Department shared Slack's opinion. The National Peace Council (NPC) had also approached the BCC¹⁰⁶ suggesting some kind of inter-organisational approach to the nuclear issue. Whilst Alan Keighley, DIA Secretary, was all for co-operation at a staff level with organisations such as NCANWT and the NPC, the consensus was that the Department should be an independent body that advised the Churches through the BCC, and not an inter-organisational group. The only co-operating body acceptable to these officers (i.e. Slack, Keighley, and the new DIA Chair Robert Mackie) was Kenneth Grubb's CCIA office in London. Mackie in particular continued to stress the importance of avoiding having the International Department regarded as an international peace organisation. He doubted whether such organisations could really understand the angle of the Churches on such a matter.¹⁰⁷

Individual Churches were galvanised into issuing public statements. The Methodist Church, for example, felt moved

¹⁰⁵ An interesting series of letters in Box 14 make Slack's attitude clear. A letter from Peggy Duff (NCANWT organising secretary) to Slack, 15 October 1957, requests a meeting between the BCC and NCANWT to discuss certain aspects of their campaign against nuclear weapons. A meeting was scheduled for 1 November 1957 but no record has been left of its detail. In reply to a letter from Lincoln and District Branch of NCANWT (17 May 1957) in which, as the NCANWT saw it, the BCC supported their work, and so requesting the address of the nearest BCC representative. Slack writes back (20 May 1957) saying the BCC does not support the aims of NCANWT.

¹⁰⁶ It is not clear when this overture took place, but Mackie mentions it to Keighley, in memo dated 19 November 1957, Box 14.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

to issue a statement rejecting the notion that nuclear weapons were compatible with the *just war* doctrine. Nuclear weapons did not allow war to be waged with a hope of achieving a just victory and "its method was not legitimate or in accordance with either man's nature as a rational being" or Christian principles and international agreements.¹⁰⁸

The Yale Resolutions

By the Summer of 1957 the International Department was exercised by the need to study the disarmament situation in the light of the so-called Yale resolutions passed by the CCIA Executive, and the Central Committee of the WCC, meeting in July at their annual sessions.¹⁰⁹

The CCIA Executive Committee resolution, *Atomic Tests and Disarmament*, expressed its concern that the hazards to health from nuclear weapons testing were taken seriously. This was not only because all people were affected in some degree by radio-active fallout, but more importantly, the fact that the effect upon generations yet unborn was unknown. The question of stopping the testing should, the CCIA felt, be considered in the wider context of disarmament. The statement made three main points: first, the main concern must always be the prevention of war itself

¹⁰⁸ Groom 1974, p.201.

¹⁰⁹ A copy of the statement by the CCIA, meeting at New Haven (Yale), Connecticut in July 1957 is in WCC 1958, pp.9-11. The same publication also contains a copy of the WCC's Central Committee statement (pp.12-13).

"for the evil of war is an offence to the spiritual nature of man."¹¹⁰ Second, the objectives of a strategy to combat the menace of atomic war must be seen as inter-related and inter-dependent. These objectives should be: (i) an international agreement to stop nuclear weapons testing; (ii) the halting of nuclear weapon production; (iii) the reduction of existing nuclear and conventional armaments (with provision, however, made for warning against surprise attacks); and (iv) the encouragement of peaceful uses of atomic energy, peaceful settlement and peaceful change. Finally, if persistent efforts at international governmental negotiation did not bring sufficient agreement on any of the inter-related objectives, reasonable risks should be taken to advance the objectives which must continue to stand as inter-dependent.

The WCC Central Committee resolution *Tests of Nuclear Weapons*, whilst recognising that the question of stopping nuclear testing be considered in the wider context as set out in the CCIA resolution, was more anxious to emphasise the moral principles that affected the whole issue of testing. The Committee felt bound to ask whether any State was justified in continuing the testing of nuclear weapons while the magnitude of the dangers was so little known and effective means of protection against the dangers lacking. Indeed, the resolution questioned the democratic credentials

¹¹⁰ WCC 1958, p.9.

of a State who conducted such tests, when citizens had not agreed to them. Whilst the Committee accepted that a comprehensive programme for disarmament must proceed by stages and much depended on the deepening of confidence between countries, they concluded "that as a first step governments conducting tests should forego them, at least for a trial period, either together or individually, in the hope that the others will do the same, a new confidence be born, and foundations be laid for reliable agreements."¹¹¹ Both the CCIA and the WCC, therefore, did not rule out forms of unilateral action.

At their September 1957¹¹² meeting the BCC's International Department decided that the issues raised by the Yale statements were significant but complex. This meant they demanded an official BCC response that could be debated before the Assembly of the whole Council at the forthcoming annual meeting in October. In accordance with this it was agreed that the Yale statements should be communicated to Prime Minister Macmillan. The Prime Minister's reply (via his secretary P.F. de Zulueta) is revealing.¹¹³

¹¹¹ WCC 1958, p.13.

¹¹² See Minutes of BCC International Department meeting, 17 September 1957, in Box BCC/DIA/1/1/4.

¹¹³ Kenneth Slack wrote to the Prime Minister on the 11th November, the PM's reply is dated 20th November. Filed under the Agenda for International Department meeting dated 10th December 1957, Box BCC/DIA/1/1/4.

Macmillan's Reply

The Prime Minister had read with great interest the statements on disarmament and nuclear weapons made at Yale. He was "greatly encouraged by the thoughtful and sincere study of the problem which these bodies have made"¹¹⁴ and could agree with all objectives described and in particular on the vital inter-relationship between them. Macmillan felt that the current proposals for partial disarmament which the British Government had joined in sponsoring through the August Disarmament Sub-Committee,¹¹⁵ suggested a plan that could be put into effect with a minimum of delay. For Macmillan this plan was founded on the same principles of progressive, controlled and secure disarmament that were advocated at Yale. In one matter, however, the Prime Minister would not agree with the views expressed. While he acknowledged that many different and sincere views were held about the question of suspending nuclear tests, he was nonetheless convinced that to suspend tests in present circumstances would not assist the cause of peace.¹¹⁶ Suspension would not prevent the stockpiling of more nuclear weapons by those countries that already had them. This could only be prevented by an agreement to end the production of fissile material for such weapons. The Prime Minister concluded that an unconditional suspension of tests

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ i.e. at the Geneva Conference. See below.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

was, in the circumstances, a risk that couldn't be justified.¹¹⁷

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the development and deployment of nuclear weapons in the years 1950-57 raised new ethical questions for Christians. The rationale for keeping or renouncing nuclear weapons was not the same as when a Western monopoly existed before 1949. This was especially so following the *Lucky Dragon* incident when more became known about the harmful effects of radiation. For the most part, however, the attitudes of the BCC and its member Churches towards the development of thermonuclear devices were as divided as their attitudes to atomic weapons. Such an attitude prevailed despite many within and without the Churches feeling that Christians were morally obliged to take a definite stand against nuclear weapons. As Driver notes: "there was a persistent feeling that protests against the use or possession of nuclear weapons, or any other weapons of mass destruction, ought to be a function, perhaps chief function, of the Christian Church."¹¹⁸ Yet the BCC stance encouraged British Christians to accept nuclear weapons by affirming the notion of a British deterrent. As the issue became overtly political (i.e. party political) the official Church line remained

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Driver 1964, p.194.

embarrassingly silent. This "embarrassed silence", however, was interpreted as in itself a supremely *political* position: 'silence' being a political 'claim' of those in favour of the *status quo*. The maintenance of silence allowing the State a free hand in determining essential norms, moral, civic and human. As the nuclear issue threatened established order the BCC revealed itself as a trusted ally of the *status quo*.

Official BCC policy seemed uncomfortable with the political ramifications of an anti-nuclear stance. For the BCC to reject nuclear war as a legitimate means with which to conduct foreign policy was to question not only the State's authority, but its very legitimacy. BCC dialogue was neither successful in communicating the concerns many people felt over H-bomb testing (save for Bishop Bell's Private Member Resolution of April 1957), or responding to the moral questions raised by the new anti-nuclear peace movement. Whilst the British Churches may have been the only real forum for debating nuclear morality, they neither formulated progressive policy or drew decisive conclusions. The development of the H-bomb had, however, intensified the *just war* debate.

Although differences of opinion between Christian pacifists and just war advocates were continuing to dominate the terms in which the debate was articulated within the Churches, thermonuclear developments had put increasing

strain on the *just war* demand for conflict to be determined by 'legitimate' authority. For many post-war Christians involved in the campaign against nuclear weapons, individual activism (i.e. outside their constituent Churches) had become a vital part of a wider political agenda. To move against nuclear weaponry was to move against the type of elitist and unrepresentative war-culture that produced such technology without democratic consultation. A coherent Christian anti-nuclear perspective began to show signs of winning greater support if it could successfully engage dialogue on two main levels: first, by communicating the idea that the nuclear age demanded new Christian thinking about the citizen's democratic responsibilities; and second, by claiming that the *just war* synthesis between force, political expediency, and morality was rendered obsolete in the nuclear era. This priority was not met with much sympathy in the larger peace movement. To most peace activists outside the Churches the old debate between pacifism and *just war* was not only invalidated but irrelevant. Differences of opinion between Christian pacifists and *just war* advocates would continue to have a significant impact on the debate in the Churches.

SECTION III:
NUCLEAR STRATEGY AND THE BCC

CHAPTER SIX:

THE NUCLEAR 'NEW' LOOK 1952-57

Introduction

The controversy surrounding the failure to secure a British H-bomb test ban brought the BCC a particular problem. First, Council officers were keenly aware that many Christians felt that nuclear weapons, and in particular thermonuclear weapons, were abhorrent and immoral. This sense was exacerbated when Western nuclear strategy was considered. Second, the officers were nevertheless unable to disavow nuclear weapons and resort to a nuclear pacifism. It was at this point that Rear Admiral Sir Anthony Buzzard made his appearance in BCC circles. Here for the first time discussion moved from generalised ends-type analysis to concerted deliberation over specific nuclear means. To understand the impact of Admiral Buzzard's thinking on the BCC it is necessary to locate his thinking in the wider strategic environment. The chapter is subsequently split into two parts. Part One introduces massive retaliation and limited war as strategic concepts before discussing the events that led Admiral Buzzard being asked to speak to the Council in October 1957. Part Two discusses the nature and

argument of Admiral Buzzard's address delivered to the Council meeting.

Part I: Massive Retaliation and Limited War

The first Western government to base its national security planning almost entirely on a declaratory policy of nuclear 'deterrence' was that of Britain in 1952.¹ From this time British policy began to move in the direction that would culminate in Duncan Sandys' famous 1957 Defence White Paper.² It is necessary to indicate, from the outset, that it would be a mistake to suggest that the British State in any way capitulated to US foreign policy requirements even if the American economic, strategic and political predicament was analogous to that of Britain's. In early 1953 the Marshal of the Royal Air Force and Chair of the Chief of Staff, Sir John Slessor, had stated:

The aim of Western policy is not primarily to be ready to win a war with the world in ruins -- though we must be as ready as possible to do that if it is forced upon us by accident or miscalculation. It is the prevention of war. The bomber holds out to us the greatest, perhaps the only hope of that. It is the great deterrent.³

The official British view was that atomic weapons had abolished war (excepting 'local' and 'civil') and that the primary focus of defence activities should be to bolster the

¹ Howard 1970, p.160; and Pierre 1972, p.87.

² This is a perspective that has long been recognised in the existing literature on British strategic policy: e.g. Groom 1974, p.207; Navias p.6.

³ Slessor "The Place of the Bomber in British Policy". Text of a 1953 speech at Chatham House. Reprinted in Slessor 1957, p.123.

deterrent. Citizens, as Slessor suggested, "must steel themselves to risks and take what may come to them, knowing that thereby they were playing as essential a part in the country's defence as the pilot in the fighter or the man behind the gun."⁴ The British political-military establishment, as Howard argued, seemed to "assume that the civilian population might be induced to grin and bear a nuclear holocaust as cheerfully as they had endured the Nazi Blitz."⁵ This new policy of deterrence, a modified 'balance of power' was described by Prime Minister Churchill as the new "balance of terror".

By August 1953 both the USA and the Soviet Union had exploded hydrogen bombs.⁶ Western politicians were particularly fearful that a Korean-type Communist aggression could now not be stopped. The notion existed that the H-bomb probably wouldn't be used to repel limited Soviet aggression, and Western nuclear policy had hence little credibility.⁷

In the United States, meanwhile, the former Chair of the Commission on a Just and Durable Peace⁸ John Foster Dulles, became the Secretary of State in Eisenhower's new⁹ 1953

⁴ Slessor 1954, p.108.

⁵ Howard 1970, p.161.

⁶ The United States exploded the first H-bomb at Eniwetok Atoll on November 6 1952. The Soviet Union exploded its first H-bomb on August 29 1953.

⁷ Groom 1974, pp.55-92.

⁸ Instituted in 1945 by the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, see Chapter Four of this thesis.

⁹ The Democrat President Truman had been beaten by the Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower in the 1953 Presidential elections.

administration. He adopted a particularly tough policy of confrontation towards the Soviets which depended on exaggerating fears of nuclear disaster.¹⁰ These ideas of 'brinkmanship' meant it was necessary to sometimes 'go to the brink' of war: "the ability to get to the verge without getting into war is the necessary art. If you cannot master it, you inevitably get into war.... We walked to the brink and we looked it in the face."¹¹ In mid-May 1953 Dulles warned the Chinese of his willingness to use the H-bomb in the Korean war. When an armistice was signed this served to strengthen the view that the Dulles approach was effective policy.

In January 1954, Dulles unveiled Eisenhower's 'New Look' foreign policy. The basic structure of the New Look was an expanded strategic air force and a much-reduced conventional force on land and at sea. It depended upon a huge American lead in nuclear weapons and slashing costs everywhere except for the Strategic Air Force and its ability to wage atomic war.¹² The heart of this policy was an increased reliance on nuclear weapons, what Dulles termed as 'massive retaliation'.¹³ This formulation was a far more precise and dogmatic representation of the same policies pursued in

¹⁰ For a good discussion on the origins of strategy see Mandelbaum 1979, pp.41-60; also *The Church and the Bomb* (1982) pp.19-42.

¹¹ Cited in Tindall and Shi 1984, p.845.

¹² Ambrose 1984, pp.171 and 225.

¹³ Bernard Brodie's discussion of the role of massive retaliation in US national policy in "The Anatomy of Deterrence" in Garnett (ed.) 1970, pp.87-105. This chapter is a reprint of Brodie's article of the same title in *World Politics* XI 2 (Jan.1959).

Whitehall over the past two years. Dulles announced the intention of the US to place its military dependence "primarily upon a great capacity to retaliate, instantly, by means and at places of our choosing" thereby gaining "more basic security at less cost."¹⁴ Massive retaliation was, as the Pentagon's public-relations people described it, "fewer conventional forces, more atomic firepower, less cost"¹⁵. In the slogan of the time, an attempt to get "more bang for the buck"¹⁶.

The rationale, as in Britain, was both political and economic. In the US case an attempt by the Republican Party to return to financial normalcy after the ruinous military expenditure of the past four years.¹⁷ The assumption was that nuclear weapons could be used to replace conventional forces and ease the budgetary burden. Eisenhower and his cabinet were fearful that the US efforts to build a superpower were leading to bankruptcy, and during 1954 the Joint Chiefs of Staff set about operationalising this economically cheaper military posture.

To Michael Howard both British and US assumptions should be judged not so much as a coherent strategic doctrine but more as a political expedient, "a diplomatic communication"

¹⁴ *The New York Times*, 13 January 1954. Cited by Paul H. Nitze, "Atoms Strategy and Policy" pp.187-199, in *Foreign Affairs* January 1956, p.187. For information on the British response to this strategy see Pierre 1972, p.88, and Kemp's M.Litt. 1986, pp.56-8.

¹⁵ Ambrose 1984, p.171.

¹⁶ Tindall and Shi 1984, p.844.

¹⁷ Howard 1970, p.165.

-- itself a manoeuvre in the articulation of the politico-military strategy of 'deterrence'.¹⁸ Yet Dulles in particular justified the policy to the public in religious or ideological terms.

Dulles's Manichaeian Moralism

To Dulles the Western world was the repository of Christian values, values which were personified and embodied in the Western State. The Cold War was a confrontation not so much between traditional powers but between ideologies. "Ideological diplomacy" by definition made a genuine international order comprising both communism and the Anglo-Saxon democracies an impossibility because communism as such constituted "The arch-enemy and the seat of all evil,...the headquarters of the last remaining wickedness in the world."¹⁹ As Herbert Butterfield wrote in 1953: "Moral politics, therefore, amounted to the notion that the West must do everything that needs to be done to insure the survival of itself, its friends, and its principles."²⁰ The Dulles approach, in Augustinian terms, was not realistic but Manichaeian. Dulles saw the world as fundamentally an arena in which the forces of good and evil were continuously at war. Because of this Dulles believed Truman's policy of 'containment' had been immoral and negative. What was

¹⁸ Howard 1970, p.165.

¹⁹ Butterfield 1953, pp.19-25 and 124.

²⁰ Howard 1970, p.246.

needed was a moral, overtly 'Christian', tactical foreign policy:

Because of our religious beliefs we attach exceptional importance to freedom. We believe in the sanctity of the human personality, in the inalienable rights with which men are endowed by their Creator and in the right to have governments of their own choosing.... We are as a nation unsympathetic to systems and governments that deny human freedom and seek to mould all men to a preconceived pattern and to use them as tools to aggrandise the state.²¹

The novelty of such talk, with its notions of 'liberation' and 'roll back' from 'Communist enslavement', brought applause from many in the Churches and on the political right. Nevertheless, for all his talk of freedom Dulles' policy made no significant departure from the traditional Western Cold War policy of containment. He rather set to institutionalise containment using rhetoric, and linking it with the military strategy of deterrence. As vice-president Richard Nixon explained in March 1954, thanks to this policy, "no longer would the Communists nibble the West to death all over the world in little wars."²²

In November 1954, Field Marshal Montgomery, NATO's Deputy²³ Supreme Allied Commander in Europe (SACEUR), made it clear that the West were basing all their "operational planning on using atomic and thermonuclear weapons in our defence... it is no longer 'they may possibly used'. It is

²¹ Quote from Dulles' "Challenge and Response in US Policy" article in *Foreign Affairs*, October 1957, p.42.

²² Cited in Tindall and Shi 1984, p.845.

²³ Kemp wrongly labels (Kemp's M.Litt. 1986, p.58) Montgomery as the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe. This is incorrect, Montgomery was Deputy to General Greunther, see Groom 1974, p.66.

very definitely 'They will be used, if we are attacked'."²⁴
The scientists had boosted this last possibility by saying it was possible, thanks to testing, to alter the character of nuclear weapons:

Recent tests point to the possibility of possessing nuclear weapons the destructiveness and radiation effects of which can be confined substantially to predetermined targets. In the future it may thus be feasible to place less reliance upon deterrence of vast retaliatory power. It may be possible to defend countries by nuclear weapons so mobile, or so placed, and to make military invasion with conventional forces a hazardous attempt.²⁵

In December 1954 NATO integrated tactical (i.e. battlefield) nuclear weapons into strategic planning. There were now three main levels of armaments: first, conventional (i.e. pre-atomic type weapons); second, tactical atomic (i.e. smaller atomic bombs whose effects it was thought could be 'confined' to within several miles); third, the H-bomb (i.e. the thermonuclear 'civilisation destroyer').

The 1957 White Paper

From these perspectives, Minister of Defence Sandys' 1957 White Paper *Defence: Outline of Future Policy*, simply placed contemporary strategic developments into a formulation that more strongly than ever reflected the British state's public

²⁴ Groom 1974, p.66; Kemp 1986 p.58.

²⁵ See Dulles' article "Challenge and Response in US Policy", in *Foreign Affairs*, October 1957, p.32.

willingness to rely on the threatened employment of nuclear weapons in response to enemy aggression.²⁶

The White Paper emphasised that "scientific advances must fundamentally alter the whole basis of military planning" and that "the time has come to revise not merely the size, but the whole character of the defence plan". In the context of recent scientific advances, "The only existing safeguard against major aggression is the power to threaten retaliation with nuclear weapons" which means Britain "must possess an appreciable element of nuclear deterrent power of her own". Central to this thesis was the perception that without a strong economy "military power cannot in the long run be supported" and that major savings in defence expenditure would have to be secured. Even after the necessary reduction in armed forces personnel and the curtailment of expenditure the Government was confident "that Britain could discharge her overseas responsibilities and make an effective contribution to the defence of the free world with armed forces smaller than they are at present".²⁷

In the same manner as the American New Look this policy was an attempt to integrate nuclear weapons with the requirements of an over-burdened economy and the demands of

²⁶ Navias 1991, p.1. Navias's discussion of the Sandys' White Paper (particularly pp.134-87) is probably the most comprehensive source available and one based on primary sources.

²⁷ *Defence: Outline of Future Policy*, Cmnd. 124, paras. 3-6, 14, 15, and 40.

Korean War rearmament programme.²⁸ Nuclear weapons, as Navias argued, "served domestic bureaucratic goals, objectives of international political status, as means of influencing American policy and as instruments for deterring Soviet power as well as, if need be, of helping counter its military might."²⁹ Groom concurs to this assessment when he noted that the decisions of the period were "above all...motivated by notions of economy and prestige".³⁰

Four points should be made if the doctrine of deterrence by the threat of massive retaliation is to be fully appreciated. First, its strategic utility and credibility are to be judged within the context of Western war culture as a whole. There was no 'strategy of options', military power was seen as an independent aspect of State policy. Second, both 'New Looks' were an attempt to maintain an effective military capability with the minimum of expenditure. An attempt to ensure that any violation of the *status quo* would be punished by the maximum means available. This premise inevitably included the idea that effective deterrence depended upon the threat of nuclear punishment against Soviet cities. The British saw Bomber Command as a supplement to, not substitute for, the United States Strategic Air Command. Third, "the most that the advocates of the deterrent policy have ever claimed for it," so

²⁸ Dockrill 1988 provides a clearly written analysis of the main currents and developments here.

²⁹ Navias 1991, p.36.

³⁰ Groom 1974, p.581.

Slessor asserted, "is that it will deter a potential aggressor from undertaking total war as an instrument of policy, as Hitler did in 1939, or from embarking upon a course of international action which obviously involves a serious risk of total war, as the Austrian Government did in 1914."³¹ Finally, the highly classified nature of all information pertaining to Bomber Command in Britain meant the absence of serious intercourse between State officials, free-lance strategic thinkers, international relations scholars, and indeed the public. This was particularly so from 1952 and up to the public declaration of the 1957 White Paper. In this way all ideas had been generated independently of democratic control.

Massive Retaliation or Graduated Deterrence

Up to the Summer of 1957 Government thinking had been dominated by the notion that the post-1945 peace had been preserved by the capacity to destroy vast segments of the human race. During 1954 alternative strategic approaches to "all or nothing" nuclear deterrence policy began appearing in academic journals such as *Foreign Affairs*, *International Affairs* and *World Politics*. A small circle of well known defence and security commentators including Sir Anthony Buzzard, Sir John Slessor, Capt. Basil Liddell Hart, and Professor Patrick Blackett came to the forefront of an

³¹ Slessor "Lecture at Oxford University". Text of a April 1955 speech. Reprinted in Slessor 1957, p.181.

attempt to alter the whole basis of Anglo-American nuclear strategy.³² These thinkers began from the realist premise that the element of force existed in international relations, that it could not be eliminated, but believed nonetheless that it could and must be intelligently controlled. In this manner they equated 'peace' (in a very Augustinian way) with 'order'. Here the theory of limited war or graduated deterrence³³ was created as a pragmatic yet moral³⁴ alternative to New Look massive retaliation. Such attempts were seen as nothing short of the pioneering of a more flexible range of military options between surrender and outright thermonuclear holocaust. For Rear Admiral Buzzard, former Director of Naval Intelligence³⁵ and Director of Vickers-Armstrong, limited war was a policy of limiting wars (in weapons, targets, area and time) to the minimum force necessary to deter and repel aggression.³⁶ In particular, Buzzard called for a unilateral and immediate

³² Garnett 1977, pp.156-7 and 213-34; plus Howard's essay "The Classical Strategists" (Howard 1970, pp.154-83) provide an over-view of the development of this debate.

³³ Caution is advised when associating Buzzard with the 'limited war' position because, in academic strategic studies, he is usually associated with the concept of 'graduated deterrence' (e.g. Howard 1970; Clark and Wheeler 1989; Navias 1991). This is to distance Buzzard's position from that of Liddell Hart and 'limited war' (which suggested Buzzard underrated the capabilities of conventional forces). In this study Buzzard's approach is always referred to as limited war because this is the term applied in BCC circles.

³⁴ This is important in understanding the subsequent BCC attraction to this policy.

³⁵ Clark and Wheeler (1989 pp.183-200), using records from the Public Records Office, examine Buzzard's role as Director of Naval Intelligence in the years 1951 to his retirement in 1954. This perspective considers Buzzard's criticisms of British nuclear strategy from within the framework of bureaucratic struggles within Whitehall. Also see Baylis 1991 on Buzzard's role in the making of modern nuclear strategy.

distinction between strategic (thermonuclear) and tactical (atomic) weapons along with a public adherence to the principle of not using more force than was necessary for dealing with smaller Soviet incursions or limited wars in other parts of the globe.³⁷ This policy, however, was tantamount to the demand that in a future global war Soviet cities would be deemed 'hostages' or bargaining leavers to bring about the termination of conflict.³⁸

The military commentator, analyst and contributor to Oldham's *Christian News-Letter* Basil Liddell Hart, wrote a letter to *The Times* in August 1955³⁹ supporting this approach. Liddell Hart criticised the argument that massive retaliation with the H-bomb was the most effective deterrent to "massive aggression". He challenged the "all or nothing" nuclear course and in its stead advocated the intermediate 'graduated deterrence'. The principle here was that the West should use the minimum force necessary both to repel a particular Soviet aggression and deter its extension. This idea, however, did not exclude massive retaliation as an ultimate resort. It was hoped an aggressor could be forced to abandon their course, but not necessarily forced into surrender. Announcing a policy of graduated action was intended to: first, make clear the West was prepared to take

³⁶ e.g. Buzzard 1956; Buzzard, Slessor, and Lowenthal 1956; and Nitze 1956.

³⁷ Navias 1991, p.26.

³⁸ Groom 1974, pp.75-84.

³⁹ *The Times* 29 August 1955.

a firm line if necessary; and second, strengthen the Western public's will to resist once they realised aggression was non-suicidal. The problem was in establishing and maintaining a dividing line between so-called 'tactical' action against the forces of an aggressor, and 'strategic' action against bases and resources.⁴⁰ The ultimate desire was to confine nuclear weapons to the battlefield and away from civilian targets. Such a strategy would be expensive. NATO policy had been geared to building up large conventional forces equipped with tactical nuclear weapons, and building large strategic airforces equipped with thermonuclear weapons. From the early 1950s, however, the Conservative government had attempted to slash defence expenditure through the reduction of conventional forces and the adoption of a nuclear-biased defence posture that weakened a limited war capability. If the West was to continue to rely on the hydrogen bomb it was logical (as the Eisenhower administration had argued) to continue cutting down conventional forces to the minimum level necessary to protect against border encroachments. Reliance on the 'Great Deterrent' (i.e. the H-bomb) should therefore have proved a logical, cheaper policy option. Liddell Hart argued, however, that a contemporary lack of clarity over strategic intentions gave the worse of both worlds --

⁴⁰ Ibid.

maximum cost with maximum insecurity. A clarified, graduated policy was really the cheapest and safest policy:

The provision of tactical atomic weapons has now been carried so far, and the Western forces so geared to them, that a return to the 'great deterrent' policy in a clear-cut way has become very unlikely, as a matter of practical politics, whatever its economic promise. It is thus the more urgent to work out a 'graduated' policy to diminish the growing risk that, through this atomic provision and 'gearing' action to meet a local emergency will precipitate a war of total destruction.⁴¹

Alternative Perspectives

The Economist, for one, questioned such reasoning.⁴² The article argued that a 'hydrogen stalemate' or 'balance of terror' was infinitely better than an unbalance and much surer than any balance of conventional weapons. The writer defined their understanding of graduated deterrence as:

In its simplest form, the proposal of graduated deterrence amounts to no more than the advocacy of a declaration by the Western powers that they would employ, in the face of a threat to peace, no more force than would be needed to remove it -- for example, to hit back with roughly twice the force employed in any local aggression.⁴³

The Economist article posed two related questions: first, would the giving of such an undertaking strengthen or weaken the chances of peace? Second, if war comes, will prior declarations limit its eventual horror? It concluded:

With regret,... a policy of graduated deterrence, in any form... does not stand up to the test of logical examination. One reverts to the major premise -- if the effectiveness of the deterrent resides precisely in its certainty and its horror, then any attempt to

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² *The Economist* 5 November 1955, pp.457-58.

⁴³ Ibid., p.457.

reduce either the certainty or the horror will reduce its power to deter.⁴⁴

Soon afterwards Anthony Buzzard helped organise a 'Conference on Limiting War'. He approached Kenneth Slack⁴⁵ to see if the BCC could recommend a list of 10 ecclesiastics whom ought to be invited. Buzzard thought it necessary to include a wide selection of British Christian thinking, particularly from the Foreign Relations Department of the Church of England, and the Church of Scotland, as well as other denominations, in such a venture. Alan Booth, the incipient⁴⁶ London Secretary of the CCIA was very enthusiastic about this overture and suggested to Slack⁴⁷ that the BCC International Department might consider establishing a permanent study group to consider Anglo-American divergences in policy. Although nothing came of this particular suggestion,⁴⁸ Alan Keighley (the DIA secretary) thought the BCC should encourage the Conference because it was both relevant to Christians and "responsibly

⁴⁴ Ibid., p.458.

⁴⁵ Buzzard's first approach to the BCC cannot be located in the BCC archives (it is also not clear whether the request was in writing or a verbal one). A letter from Booth to Slack dated 31 October 1956, Box 13, however mentions Buzzard's approach. Michael Howard (1989b, p.9) attests that Buzzard in fact approached his local bishop (Bell) with his ideas, who in turn introduced Buzzard to Kenneth Grubb. On this view it was Grubb who introduced Buzzard to BCC circles.

⁴⁶ Booth officially became the London Secretary of the CCIA from the 1 January 1957. At the same time he was asked to serve as consultant to the BCC International Department. See the Minutes of the 65th DIA meeting 4 December 1956, Box 13.

⁴⁷ Booth to Slack, 31 October 1956, BCC Box 13.

⁴⁸ It is not clear why nothing came of this suggestion. An internal memo from Keighley to Slack, argued that the Anglo-American study group would certainly be of great value, "...but most of the people on it would need to be highly intelligent Christian laymen, for several reasons (not suggested)." See memo dated 12 November 1956, BCC Box 13.

sponsored."⁴⁹ The 'Conference on Limiting War' was held in Brighton on the 20 January 1957 with Booth serving as Conference Secretary. The Conference involved 75 Britons and Americans interested in the problems of defence in a nuclear age. These people were drawn both from those with official experience and from voluntary organisations concerned with foreign policy and international affairs including the Churches. After the Conference the participants formed themselves into a 'Brighton Conference Association.'⁵⁰

The International Department and the Limited War Thesis

At their September 1957⁵¹ meeting the International Department had decided that the issues raised by the summer Yale resolutions demanded an official response. It was decided the best way to proceed would be to discuss the statements with those WCC Central Committee members who were also members of the BCC, with a view to passing a BCC resolution. Before deciding to pass a resolution they thought it advisable to invite the opinion of a speaker of

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ On the 28th November 1958, after a donation from the Ford Foundation, the Brighton Conference Association was converted into the well-known Institute for Strategic Studies with its own permanent staff. Kenneth Grubb became Chair of its Executive Committee and John Slessor vice-president. Its Council included many of the personalities considered by this thesis including Professor Blackett, Alan Booth, Anthony Buzzard, Basil Liddell Hart, Denis Healey, Michael Howard and Canon Waddams. In 1959 the Institute founded its own periodical tellingly entitled *Survival*. An overview of the history of the organisation that is particularly useful (in that it draws out its importance to the study and practice of IR in Britain) is provided by Howard 1989b.

⁵¹ See Minutes of BCC International Department meeting, 17 September 1957, in Box BCC/DIA/1/1/4.

high calibre who was familiar with the atmosphere in which decisions on national defence were taken. The debate over who to ask was largely determined by the impact of Henry Kissinger's new book *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*.⁵²

Kissinger's book has been described as the catalyst which initiated the so-called 'golden age' of contemporary strategic thought.⁵³ It was a book in which Kissinger aligned himself with Admiral Buzzard's credo that avoidance of war meant increasing emphasis on tactical weapons -- graduated deterrence at acceptable cost -- and the negotiation of limitations in the conduct of war. He explored issues of all-out and limited war and declared that the doctrine of massive retaliation was dangerously dated now the Soviets had built their own bomb. Kissinger argued: (1) that the West's attitude to war was rigid in contrast to the flexibility, as he saw it, of Soviet theory and practice; (2) that the British should declare, along with the Americans, a distinction between tactical and nuclear weapons making. This would make available small atomic weapons for the use of NATO fighting forces in the field and acknowledge that thermonuclear strategic weapons were irrelevant in the conduct of foreign policy in peripheral areas of the world; (3) he called for the appropriate conventional forces to be made available with which to fight

⁵² Kissinger 1957.

⁵³ See John Garnet's introduction: Garnet 1970, p.24. Garnet notes this 'golden age' probably concluded in the early 1960s with Robert McNamara's famous policy statements.

local wars; and (4) that tactical nuclear weapons were an appropriate response for this purpose. Rather, as Gordon Dean wrote in his introduction, the West should be "unwilling to accept gradual Russian enslavement of other peoples around the world, which we know will eventually lead to our own enslavement, we are forced to adopt a posture that, despite Russian military capabilities and despite their long-free intentions, freedom shall be preserved to us."⁵⁴ Kissinger argued that the West should be willing to find the moral certainty to act without the support of extremism, and to run risks without a guarantee of success. He suggested NATO's absolute dependence on the means and strategy of massive retaliation was ultimately a weak one precisely because it went against the grain of Western morality. And that the West and the Soviets, though ideological adversaries, could still act as potential partners in the preservation of a mutually acceptable *status quo*.⁵⁵ From this context Kissinger could also conclude that because all real threats were external to the West, unilateralists or neutralists operated in fact to support the Soviet Union.⁵⁶

The DIA's CCIA consultant, Alan Booth, felt Kissinger's book was "required reading for any one seriously concerned

⁵⁴ Kissinger 1957, p.vii.

⁵⁵ Howard 1989a, p.5.

⁵⁶ A fascinating discussion of Kissinger's role in the development of this 'survival of Western values' idea is considered in Olson's 1962 PhD, pp.155-84.

with international peace and I confess I have not hit on any similar *magnum opus* on the subject for many years."⁵⁷ Booth wrote to the International Department's secretary, Alan Keighley enclosing a paper summarising half a dozen thoughts derived from reflecting on the current situation and Kissinger's book. Booth felt it was very important, in particular, to find common ground between BCC concerns and the Brighton Conference Association. He hoped the DIA would consider convening a small (perhaps meeting bi-monthly, drawn from the Brighton Conference) standing group, to advise on strategic nuclear matters. For Booth "There (was) urgent need for Christian opinion to be technically informed and our present set of contacts may give us the chance to get the kind of advice we most need."⁵⁸

Booth's paper is revealing in that it serves to illustrate how opinion was moving in the Buzzardist direction. Booth's paper was concerned with discussing the debate on limited war which had drew the Brighton Conference together. This line of thinking had developed widely since the Conference and had produced a fairly extensive literature. It included not only Kissinger's book, but articles by James King of the US Army's Operations Research Office in *Army* (August 1957) and *The New Republic* (July 1957), Dulles's article in *Foreign Affairs* (October 1957).

⁵⁷ Booth to Keighley, 1 October 1957, BCC Box 14.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

Extensive reviews of Kissinger had also appeared in *The Times*, *The Manchester Guardian*, *The Economist*, *The Observer*, *The Daily Telegraph* (September 1957) and such thinking, for Booth, had shown "...at least the line along which some positive (Christian) thinking can be fruitfully done on the question of war in the nuclear age. The ramifications of the debate are political, moral and technical..."⁵⁹ Booth saw the moral ramifications of the debate as particularly relevant for Church thinking. While civilians were preoccupied with stopping a drift toward world atomic war, the armed forces and politicians were increasingly concerned that diplomacy and military pressure was inhibited by the "shadow of the great deterrent."⁶⁰ Paralysis had therefore set in between the choice of small enlargements of Soviet domination and suicidal war. For Booth such considerations raised the question of whether Christians, at present, were too inclined to concern themselves primarily with the question of Peace. In this, Booth asked, are Christians "...not simply adopting the position of a war-weary mankind which wants to be left in peace?"⁶¹ He felt it instructive to reflect how little the Bible concerned itself with peace as an end in itself:

Classical Christian thinking has emphasised rather Order and Justice, and has not flinched from the thought that the exercise of power and force is necessary to secure these two ends. (Contemporary

⁵⁹ Booth's paper, p.1. BCC Box 14.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., p.2.

Christian thinking would include under Justice the duty of preserving and developing a society in which men may increasingly make responsible choices, and one which is open to constant criticism and correction. In this sense we might add a dynamic term "Freedom" to the more static concepts of Order and Justice.) It has never been a part of Christian political insight to imagine that Order, Justice and Freedom could be secured on the basis of a general goodwill and tolerance.⁶²

For Booth such thinking was rather the illusion of a sentimental generation which looked for easy solutions. The crux of the matter was that Christians, fortunately, had reason to believe that there are things for which God cared for in human affairs more than that humanity should be left to pursue its own interests without the disturbance of conflict. Since there was no possibility of establishing, in the near future, an international authority to enforce Order, Justice and the conditions of Freedom, Christians "must learn to live in a disorderly situation and extract from it what remains available for the creation of a sound world society. In practice this meant living with competing powers and governments, and using the conflicts of power to achieve some measure of stability."⁶³ Whilst this state of affairs was not a safe situation, the Christian must aim to make the world as humane as possible, and to train people to live creatively in this kind of insecurity. This had to be a familiar task for Christians whose security does not lie within history. Two policies should therefore be adopted by the BCC: first, the recognition that both Great Powers were

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

capable of mutual destruction of 'apocalyptic proportions', and henceforth putting aside any thought of total Western victory -- "In this sense co-existence is the only alternative to co-destruction."⁶⁴ Second, Christians must acknowledge that apart from all-out confrontation there were many areas that existed where Super-powers could seek local advantages: "Here the necessity is to produce local balances of power, to prevent anarchic action and compel the submission of conflicts to the procedures of diplomacy."⁶⁵ In the creation of such local balances of power the limited war school of thought, that Booth and others were concerned, could be asserted. With these two policies British Christian opinion could, and should, be able to find common concern with the Brighton Conference Association and their kind.

Booth's Propositions

In terms of limiting war, Booth made several propositions available for exercising restraining. First, he noted that the idea that war inevitably becomes "total" is a modern one. In the past rulers often kept control of war, with a view to the achievement of ends far short of the crushing of the will of the opponent. (The prospect of destroying an enemy completely was only conceivable in the nuclear age.) To prevent war becoming total two vital conditions must be

⁶⁴ Booth's paper p.3, BCC Box 14.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

fulfilled: (i) There must be vigorous political control of military plans and performance. "The means of ensuring this are amongst the most urgent to which Christians can give their attention."⁶⁶ (ii) Civilians must be prepared and informed beforehand as to the sacrifices called for in the exercise of military power in circumstances where there can be no victory -- only a return to negotiation. "Otherwise the population in democratic countries may be moved to demand disastrous actions to 'solve' a problem to which there was no solution. This demanded a degree of poise and balance to which Christians ought to be ready to contribute."⁶⁷

Booth's second proposition was that the military preparations of the West were ill designed to exert the desired local pressures. "Their reliance on the deterrent tends to make them incapable of meeting Korean-type situations and therefore contributes to world instability. If economy and a refusal to imperil living standards or to accept the burden of military service tempts them to spend their substance chiefly on megaton devices and their delivery, they will sign their own death warrant, one way or another -- by submitting to piecemeal attacks, or by unleashing all-out-war."⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p.4.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

A third proposition was that, in the first instance, "the limitations set upon a 'Limited War' should be limitations of aim rather than of weapons....The nature of the aim in fact controls the nature of the weapons used."⁶⁹ This was of cardinal importance because if there was a hope to maintain limitations, in practice clear objectives must be in view from the start. The terms on which hostilities would cease and negotiations resumed must be outlined. "Only in this way can a serious war, even if it begins with the use of 'conventional' weapons, be prevented from rapid enlargement to 'total' proportions."⁷⁰

Booth's final proposition was the question as to whether small nuclear weapons could be used in a limited war. This needed active debate. On one hand, Booth noted some specialists said a war of any size could not be fought between nuclear powers without nuclear weapons: "'Conventional' warfare requires the massing of a striking force against a defended line, and such a massing would present so tempting a nuclear target that no soldier would base his plans on its invincibility. Further, it is argued that the vast periphery of the Communist world, its interior lines, capacity for secrecy and cheap manpower make it necessary for the West to match a local move with the nuclear power of a much smaller force. And the development of atomic warheads as small as a 10 ton TNT bomb seems to

⁶⁹ Booth's paper p.4, BCC Box 14.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

some to make the distinction between weapons unreal."⁷¹ On the other hand, Booth was aware others had argued that despite the many temptations to cross any set limits in war, the distinction between 'conventional' and nuclear weapons was so obvious and recognisable it would not be crossed lightly. Here public opinion could weigh heavily against the use of nuclear weapons to counterbalance military advantages. Booth felt that whilst such technical tactical and strategic questions could not be judged by the average person, they could nevertheless ask the military planners to seek for the smallest margin of risk on the battlefield:

The whole of this debate can be made to appear as an attempt to 'make war possible' again. But its significance is rather that it attempts to devise methods of stability, with clearly preconditioned devices for limitations of damage, in a world of conflicting power that cannot at present be ordered or harmonised. The issue of the debate has consequences for other matters such as the continuance of nuclear tests, in so far as these could be confined, for instance, to the development of increasingly discriminating (i.e. 'tactical nuclear') weapons.⁷²

Notwithstanding the impact of Kissinger's book, and Booth's paper, Admiral Buzzard was not the automatic first choice as BCC speaker. It was hoped that Sir Thomas Taylor would agree to speak⁷³ but, because of his chairing of the WCC group with this concern⁷⁴, he declined the invitation.

⁷¹ Ibid., pp.4-5.

⁷² Ibid., p.5.

⁷³ This fact was revealed in a personal letter from Robert Mackie, Chair of the DIA, to Bishop Bell of Chichester, 15 November 1957, Box 14,

⁷⁴ Taylor, along with Dr. Robert Bilheimer, would be responsible for the WCC 1958 'Provisional Study Document' *Christians and the Prevention of War in an Atomic Age -- A Theological Discussion*. This document is discussed in Chapter Seven of this thesis.

Thanks in no small part to Booth's endorsement and enthusiasm, the person chosen to represent "the point of view of one familiar with the outlook of those responsible for decisions on national defence"⁷⁵ was Anthony Buzzard.

Part II: Admiral Buzzard's Council Address

On the 29th October 1957 the British Council of Churches met for their annual Assembly at Leeds. Each Department was asked to present a Report and forward resolutions it hoped Council to pass. At the spring meeting the Council had passed the controversial Private Member's resolution moved by Bishop Bell. The obvious texts that needed consideration were the Yale statements made by the CCIA and Central Committee of the WCC that opened the possibility for a Christian endorsement of unilateral nuclear disarmament. Alan Keighley, as DIA secretary, was faced with the question of what line the International Department should recommend. It was Keighley's intention, however, "to avoid a snap resolution, and to try to get the Council to face the realities of the situation, as well as the moralities of it."⁷⁶ It was decided that a generalised discussion would take place on the basis of Admiral Buzzard's talk on the first morning of the Council's meeting. Those members of the WCC Central Committee and the International Department

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Keighley to Buzzard, 2 October 1957, BCC Box 14.

who were present, would then meet and decide what statement the Council should be asked to adopt.

Alan Keighley requested Sir Anthony to speak for twenty minutes and discuss two issues. First, something of the atmosphere in which defence decisions had to be taken. Second, a word pointing out the possibility that "atomic war of any kind need not lead to use of the 'Great Deterrent.'" Granted the existence of the great deterrent "how could Christians learn to carry on the business of running the world as before, under its shadow."⁷⁷ Buzzard began his address by stating his case:

As a very ordinary Churchman, who happens to have been closely connected with defence policy, I have often been struck by the gap which exists between Church opinion on this matter, and the policies evolved by the experts in Whitehall. The reason for this gap is, I suppose, that the Church sets its sights on the ultimate ideal, with the result that it is sometimes accused of having its feet off the ground, whereas Whitehall is mainly concerned with what action is immediately practicable, and all too often assumes that moral considerations cannot apply when dealing with Communists and war. That there is a demand for this gap to be filled is, I think, clear from the tremendously strong public feelings which are aroused on such occasions as the recent Labour Party debate⁷⁸ on the H-bomb.⁷⁹

Buzzard was not about to suggest what should be done to help bridge this problem of 'middle axioms' in the realm of

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Buzzard refers to the 1957 Labour Party's October Conference in Brighton where Nye Bevan, archetypal hero of the left, denounced nuclear unilateralism as tantamount to "sending a Foreign Secretary naked into the conference chamber." For detail of Bevan's painfully multilateralist speech see Groom 1974, pp.300-5; and the sympathetic but aggrieved analysis by Foot 1975, pp.547-83.

⁷⁹ p.1 of the transcript of Buzzard's speech to Council, 29 October 1957, Box BCC/DIA/1/1/4.

Christian ethics. He rather wanted to propose four concrete steps that would bring the Churches nearer to Government and Whitehall. These steps would not only help close the gap between the temporal and the spiritual, but help clear the current impasse in world defence and disarmament talks. Indeed, all proposals could be taken without Soviet agreement, and -- with one minor exception -- were complementary to the Yale Summer statements, and to the current Western disarmament proposals.⁸⁰

Buzzard's first proposal was the formulation of a set of moral or legal principles which the world's politicians could use when framing defence policies. These were centred around a modernised version of the just war and involved re-

⁸⁰ Buzzard is building on notions related to the Western 'Package Plan' of 1957. This plan was announced on the 29 August 1957 and included: a) the suspension of nuclear tests, under a system to be devised; b) the 'cutting-off' of new production of fissile material for military use; c) the 'equitable transfer' of all fissile material from existing weapons stocks to peaceful use. At first sight these proposals seemed a reasonable advance, indeed they might well have proved to be, but the Soviets turned them down for the following reasons: a) whilst they accepted the suspension of tests and a system of control posts on Soviet soil, they felt suspension should not be made conditional on acceptance of 'cut-off', indeed they refused to accept cut-off unless an agreement for the total abolition of stocks was reached; b) the Soviets argued that 'cut-off' by itself was meaningless, because the USA had already enough nuclear weapons to blow the world up several times over. Here the Soviets had a legitimate point; c) they could not agree to 'equitable transfers' because the US coupled the proposal with a declaration to the effect that the US must retain a substantial part of her nuclear stocks, and must be free to place nuclear war-heads on the territories of allies and to train allies' troops in their use. The basis of 'equitable transfer' proposed was finally 53 kg transferred by US for every 47 kg transferred by the Soviet Union. Matters were not made any better when afterwards, President Eisenhower told the American people that US stocks were far greater in quantity and quality than those of the Soviet Union. It was estimated that US stocks were three times as great as Russian stocks. This meant that if the Soviet Union accepted the proposals, Soviet stocks would approach nil and US stocks would be two-thirds of their current levels. In reality it could not be hoped the Soviets would ever accept this plan, or anything like it. See Noel-Baker 1958, pp.24-7, 220-1.

stating old principles. Buzzard suggested these might be drawn up and proclaimed by international lawyers rather than by the Church, but he felt sure the Church should lead the appeal for this task to be done. These principles were envisaged as:

Fighting can only be legally justified if the cause is a really just one, such as defence against blatant aggression, or the removal of some intolerable basic injustice. It can only be justified if all other means of removing that cause have been tried first to the limit. In carrying out that fighting, only the minimum force necessary must be used. The destruction wrought must be limited so as never to become disproportionate to the issue at stake. The weapons used must always be reasonably controlled, and reasonably discriminate, as between armed forces and civilians, and as between combatants and neutrals.⁸¹

These just war principles would first be codified by the international lawyers of the Western Powers; the Communists and uncommitted countries would then be invited to say whether (or not) they were in agreement. For Buzzard this first step would help the West regain a vital 'sense of direction' with which to face disarmament talks.

Buzzard's second desire was "to stop the present vicious circle in the arms race, in which mutual fear is countered by arms, which is then countered by more fear, and then more arms."⁸² The key to this lay in a honest appraisal of massive retaliation and the balance of power. Buzzard avowed this approach was the best hope for peace until a 'World Government and Police Force' could be realised. In

⁸¹ p.2 of the transcript of Buzzard's speech to Council, 29 October 1957, Box BCC/DIA/1/1/4.

⁸² Ibid.

practice this meant accepting that, notwithstanding the Soviets recent lead in system technology (i.e. the launch of *Sputnik I*⁸³), the West had not a balance, but rather a great superiority over the Soviets in massive retaliation capability. This was particularly so because the United States possessed more nuclear weapons, better techniques for delivery, and above all, a tremendous geographical advantage. Even though the Soviets could catch up in weapons and techniques, geographical advantage would always allow the United States to deliver weapons from bases three times as close to the Soviet Union, as Soviet bases could be to vital US targets. Apart from these relative considerations, the power of thermonuclear weapons was such that a saturation point had been reached in which relative factors were no longer significant. The mere existence of the hydrogen bomb was "making total war utterly repugnant to both."⁸⁴ Buzzard suggested that the West, and the US in particular, acknowledged that they were no longer interested in a 'neck to neck race' in thermonuclear weapons, but only intended maintaining sufficient numbers of H-bombs to ensure that any potential opponent would always do their utmost to avoid such total war. In other words: "... we (the West)

⁸³ *Sputnik* proved the Soviets had the ability to launch inter-continental ballistic missiles. For detail see Denis Healey's article 'Sputnik and Western Defence' in the April 1958 *International Affairs*. Groom 1974, pp.253-66 details the effect of *Sputnik* on the development of Western weaponry.

⁸⁴ p.2 of the transcript of Buzzard's speech to Council, 29 October 1957, Box BCC/DIA/1/1/4.

should openly accept the stalemate or balance of power in terms of total war weapons."⁸⁵

Following this awareness of the nature of the global balance of power, it was henceforth possible for Britain to renounce unilaterally her intention of ever again fighting a total global war to its logical conclusion. In this respect a total nuclear war should be seen as never satisfying the requirements of *just war*. Indeed, "such a disaster could never be in proportion to any issue at stake, and it could never be the lesser of two evils, since it would virtually mean the destruction of the human race."⁸⁶ The maintenance of sufficient power to make total war pointless to the Communists would permit urgent financial savings to be made, not only in H-bombs, but also in the other preparations necessary to wage total global war.

The Local Balance of Power

The third step Buzzard advocated concerned the balance of power in regard to local limited war. Unlike the global balance, he believed that here the Soviets enjoyed great superiority on account of their inherent strength in conventional forces. This superiority was due not only to vast reserves of personnel, but also to inherent factors such as the communication lines with which geo-politics had blessed them, and to the initiative which they held "as

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

dictators and potential aggressors" enabling them to mobilise and re-deploy their forces much more quickly and secretly than the West could. Consequently, if there was to be a local balance of power, the West was in the terrible dilemma of having in some cases to initiate at least limited atomic war in retaliation for serious local aggression by conventional forces. For Buzzard this, despite Bell's call for 'no first use', was a fundamental factor from which the West was unable to escape, at least until disarmament had proceeded dramatically.

Another fundamental factor was that the West was more likely to deter, or repel, serious conventional aggression with limited atomic war even though this meant the Soviets may respond with nuclear weapons. This was because limited atomic war always favoured the defender of a territory more than the attacker; it enabled a given front to be defended with far fewer forces; and it enabled effective retaliation to be much swifter and thus made a rapid *fait accompli* by the aggressor much more difficult.⁸⁷ This strategy, however, also made Soviet aggression less politically profitable as it meant they either faced a first crucial atomic blow, or they initiated nuclear aggression, which for a limited local issue was likely to bring much more harm than good. Although this was not a desirable state of affairs for the West, it was nevertheless, a policy of

⁸⁷ p.3 of the transcript of Buzzard's speech to Council, 29 October 1957, Box BCC/DIA/1/1/4.

limiting nuclear war to which the USA was now committing itself to in the stead of its previous massive retaliation strategy.

According to Buzzard most people accepted the very idea of nuclear limitation and distinction as outrageous. This meant that before such a limited war policy could be entertained it was necessary to comprehend the complexity of the issues. What were the alternatives? To answer this meant moving the debate from facts to opinions.

To Buzzard, Britain had three possible alternatives to limited war: first, to continue on its existing path and endorse a massive retaliation strategy -- the 'all or nothing' option. Second, invest in many more conventional forces, the expensive and hence unrealistic option. Finally, the passive resistance option; the logical development of which was that the West should give up its intention to fight any war and spend its resources to better effect. Because there was no prospect of a Western Government ever taking responsibility for this it was as unrealistic as 'option two'.⁸⁸ The practicable choice was

⁸⁸ Frank Myers' 1965 PhD is of interest here. Myers details how British 'peace organisations' such as the PPU, CND, and the Committee of 100 were involved in developing 'Gandhian' (see particularly Bondurant 1958 for an over-view) tactics of passive or non-violent resistance as an alternative to waging war in a nuclear age. Gandhi's success, particularly in putting the British government on the defensive in India in the 1920s and South Africa in the 1930s, had showed the potential of non-violent techniques against hostile governments. Richard B. Gregg's *The Power of Non-Violence* (New York: Fellowship of Reconciliation, 1951) and Bart de Ligt's *The Conquest of Violence: An Essay on War and Revolution* (London: Routledge, 1937) were especially influential in the fostering of this debate. Both Gregg (a US lawyer and active trade-unionist) and de Ligt (a Dutch pacifist priest) proposed detailed plans

henceforth between massive retaliation "abandoning the local balance of power and admitting that we cannot deal with Communism without threatening genocide"⁸⁹ or limited war a *via media* between *Realpolitik* extremes.

There were problems of course. On one hand Christians needed to ask whether nuclear war could be sufficiently limited in proportion to the issues likely to be at stake. In a word, could limited war be controlled and made discriminate, could it be prevented from escalating to thermonuclear war? On the other hand, the fact that the Armed Forces were particularly against the idea of limited war because they believed hands would be tied in advance if the West indicated the sort of limitations it might adopt in a particular situation. On this view the use of H-bombs could not be precluded if the old military principle of economy of force was to be relied on.

Limitations

Buzzard argued that the problem of limitation and discrimination was not so difficult as to be incapable of being made practicable. Limitations could be made practicable after much preparation, and considerable

of individual and collective action to prevent war and make war impossible. Proposals ranged from propaganda campaigns, and conscientious objection, to general strikes and the sabotage of machines, bridges and transport necessary to conduct war. Sybil Morrison however, points out (1962, p.60) that 'passive resistance' was also controversial because some British pacifists thought even non-violence was coercive and therefore not pacifist.

⁸⁹ p.3 of the transcript of Buzzard's speech to Council, 29 October 1957, Box BCC/DIA/1/1/4.

modifications to present military practice. Hostilities would of course have to be localised. Weapons would need to be restricted by size and radio-active fall-out, targets restricted away from centres of population, and above all, war aims strictly limited. For Buzzard in this last point lay "the key to the whole problem. We must surely give up all ideas of unconditional surrender, or indeed of victory as such, and only aim at a return to negotiations on the basis of the minimum conditions required to remove the original injustice."⁹⁰ Limitations such as these needed to be worked out and aired in general terms so the world could be conditioned to them beforehand. Only then did they stand a good chance of being effective as a local deterrent. The reason was that the Soviets, despite their propaganda, were just as anxious to conform to reasonable limitations for the sole reason that it was in their self-interest to do so. This was the way to override the mutual terror of total thermonuclear war.

What was needed, if limited war was to serve as a credible nuclear *just war* strategy, was: first, the restoration of local balances of power; and second, convincing the world that limited atomic warfare could be strictly limited and that it did not need to degenerate into total war. To this end he was pleased to report that US Secretary Dulles was beginning to endorse this approach.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p.4.

However "as yet, NATO policy does not seem to have begun to move in that direction, and in this country the recent White Paper⁹¹ and subsequent Government statements have left the country in disunity and confusion on this point."⁹²

Buzzard's fourth and final proposal involved facing one more disagreeable fact. In one area, the German or Central Front in Western Europe, it was considered militarily impractical to stop all-out Soviet aggression even with limited atomic weapons. To maintain the local balance of power in this area it was necessary to retain the right to initiate the use of the H-bomb.⁹³ Whilst such a major local aggression was extremely unlikely, there was still the possibility that the threat would arise unintentionally as a result of some smaller conflict:

To tolerate any longer than absolutely necessary this situation, in which we may have to be the first to use the H-bomb, is utterly repugnant by any moral or legal standards. Nor is it expedient, if we want to deal with Communism without destroying all, and if we want to negotiate the reunification of Germany from a position of realistic power balance."⁹⁴

Escape from this dilemma required two things. First, transferring to Germany some of the economic resources wasted in trying to overweight an already saturated global balance of power. (This would be achieved by Buzzard's

⁹¹ Buzzard is referring to the 1957 White Paper, *Defence: Outline of Future Policy*, Cmnd. 124.

⁹² p.4 of the transcript of Buzzard's speech to Council, 29 October 1957, Box BCC/DIA/1/1/4.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ p.4 of the transcript of Buzzard's speech to Council, 29 October 1957, Box BCC/DIA/1/1/4.

second proposal to halt the arms race.) Second, persuading the Western public that it was absolutely vital and advantageous to divert the resources needed for the local balance of power in Germany. This task seemed futile at present when all that was offered was a total war in exchange for serious conflict in that area. The task could nevertheless be made possible, by the proposal to distinguish limited war from massive retaliation, because this would make the preparations for limited atomic war seem worthwhile. The Sandys' White Paper had made both these considerations harder to achieve. The damage could only be repaired by Western Governments illustrating to their public (and the Soviets) the nature of the dilemma they were facing in Germany and stating that they were nevertheless determined to find a solution by restoring the local balance of power.

Buzzard's Four Points

Buzzard's thesis can be summarised: first, lawyers should re-state the legal principles of the just war, supported by the Churches, as a target at which the policy makers should aim. Second, the West should ease the arms race in total war weapons by openly accepting the global balance of power and stating that only enough of these weapons would be kept to make the prospect of massive retaliation thoroughly repugnant. This involved stating that the West was no

longer prepared to fight such a war to the finish, nor spend the necessary resources preparing for it. Third, the West should restore the local balance of power by explaining publicly the differences between limited war and massive retaliation. This involved advocating why limited nuclear war might have to be initiated in particular circumstances, and why it was felt it could be limited and not escalate into total war. If this proposal was not carried out it was necessary to give up limited war preparations and put the money into stronger and more mobile conventional forces. Finally, the West should openly resolve to complete the restoration of the local balance of power in Germany -- both limited nuclear and conventional -- in order to escape from the danger of the first use of the H-bomb. Buzzard summed up his proposals by adding that:

Apart from the first proposal -- concerning the principle of the just war, the key to the rest lies in the third -- that of distinguishing between limited atomic and total war -- and this must come first. For until that has been done, it is impossible to relax the race in total war weapons which we must brandish for every minor issue, and it is impossible to build up our strength in Germany, for as we saw that appears futile. Together, all four proposals should provide the workable balance of power which must surely help equitable disarmament, as well as peace. And they would begin to introduce moderation, control and the rule of law, disciplined by a healthy mutual fear of total war, until disarmament or a world police force can come to our rescue.⁹⁵

For Buzzard all these proposals were complementary to, not instead of, present efforts to secure disarmament save in

⁹⁵ p.5 of the transcript of Buzzard's speech to Council, 29 October 1957, Box BCC/DIA/1/1/4.

one respect. This was, instead of pressing for the cessation of all nuclear testing and production, the West should press only to stop the testing and production of H-bombs. This was because it was vital to the whole concept of limiting war that small and clean (i.e. weapons producing less radioactive fall-out) nuclear weapons should be made as discriminating as scientists could make them.

In conclusion Buzzard submitted his four steps and hoped they were acceptable to the Church, Whitehall and Washington. He noted that support for some of them had been growing and felt nothing more ambitious could be acceptable at present. Buzzard maintained that nothing less would meet the present urgent situation. Indeed:

Whatever action the Church may, or may not, think appropriate to take, may I suggest that, at all events, it should insist on the people being given sufficient facts to enable the public conscience to wrestle with the tremendous moral issues at stake, not merely when we are threatened, but in the long term preparations beforehand, which will largely commit us, in advance, to the action we take in a crisis. The challenge is therefore before us now, and it is nothing less than whether nuclear power shall prove to be man's triumph or his downfall.⁹⁶

By any standards Buzzard made a dramatic impact on the BCC with his key-note speech to Council. To many in the BCC his speech reminded them that Christians were involved in practical decisions as well as in moral statements.⁹⁷ Following the speech the BCC General Assembly resolved to welcome the initiative of the International Department in

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Mackie to Bell, 15 November 1957, Box 14.

inviting Sir Anthony Buzzard to address it, and expressed its appreciation of his contribution to their thinking on nuclear weapons.⁹⁸ The BCC then passed a Private Member's resolution moved by Kenneth Grubb which resolved:

That the Council further requests the International Department to set up a special group from its own membership and from people related to defence policy which would give continuous study to the moral aspects of the disarmament problem and of defence policy in the light of nuclear armament, with a view to advising the Council from time to time on these matters.⁹⁹

The DIA Chair Robert Mackie, however, strenuously denied that this motion indicated that the BCC had adopted the Buzzard thesis.¹⁰⁰ Yet Buzzard's long address did have the effect of creating a lack of discussion time that meant the Yale suggestions were not adequately dealt with. Additional resolutions simply welcomed the Yale statements noting that the Council "was impressed by the consensus of ecumenical opinion expressed in these resolutions"¹⁰¹. This is significant in itself, especially considering the unilateralist significance of the Yale statements. Pacifists and nuclear pacifists proved to be unhappy with this situation.

⁹⁸ See Section (I) of the resolution passed in October 1957, contained in a supplement to *The Churches and the Hydrogen Bomb*, n.d. but 1955.

⁹⁹ Copy of resolution taken from the July 1958 supplement to the BCC's *The Churches and the Hydrogen Bomb*, n.d. but 1955.

¹⁰⁰ Mackie to Bell, 15 November 1957, Box 14.

¹⁰¹ Section (iii) of BCC's October 1957 resolution. Resolution contained in a supplement to *The Churches and the Hydrogen Bomb*, n.d. but 1955.

Opposition to Buzzard

Those BCC representatives who had served on the WCC Central Committee at Yale were particularly disappointed with Buzzard's address. The British press had failed to report that the WCC was urging governments to stop nuclear weapons testing and that this policy was 'welcomed' by the BCC and had been communicated to the Prime Minister. But the press could hardly be blamed. As the Rev. Dr. Eric Baker¹⁰², a Methodist WCC representative (and General Secretary of the National Peace Council) present at Buzzard's paper pointed out, the effect of Sir Anthony "was to divert attention from the real issue created by the Yale resolutions, which in consequence were never properly debated by the Council."¹⁰³

Another Methodist minister, the Rev. John Vincent¹⁰⁴, wrote to Keighley¹⁰⁵ seriously questioning the logic and legitimacy of the BCC having a speaker and a Study Group looking into a matter upon which the WCC thought that there was only one thing to say, "leave it alone". Vincent (a good friend of Keighley¹⁰⁶) requested Keighley write back with the logic behind the study group. For Vincent it seemed the DIA had committed itself to Buzzard's line which

¹⁰² Baker to Keighley, n.d. but probably October 1957, Box 14.

¹⁰³ c.f. report in *The Methodist Recorder*, 31 October 1957.

¹⁰⁴ Vincent became a sincere supporter of CND, and firm critic of the BCC 'multilateralist' approach. Vincent wrote a useful book *Christ In a Nuclear World* (1962) that criticised both the theology and politics of the BCC approach.

¹⁰⁵ Vincent to Keighley, 4 November 1957, Box 14.

¹⁰⁶ Reference in Keighley's letter to Baker, n.d. but probably October 1957, Box 14.

at least implied a criticism of the WCC one. To him the possibility of a limited nuclear war was simply absurd: "...that the Church of all folk should toy with the idea is, to my mind, very serious. I thought you were a pacifist, anyway!"¹⁰⁷ Indeed, the BCC had set up a group to "give continuous study to the moral aspects of the disarmament problem...with a view to advising Council."¹⁰⁸ This group was not, of course, supposed to be officially committed to Buzzard's views though the Council did "express its appreciation of his contribution to its thinking on nuclear weapons."¹⁰⁹ The very existence of such a group, for Vincent, not only suggested that those in authority would not take very much notice of the Yale resolution's call for abandonment of tests, but also implied that there was something further and more particular to be said from the Christian point of view as strategic thinking altered. For people like Vincent, until the gap in Christian ethics between outright condemnation and occasional use of nuclear weapons was bridged (and Buzzard was aware that he was not bridging it), the Churches should have only one thing to say about nuclear weapons: "abandon them."¹¹⁰ Buzzard's alternative was not limited disarmament but complete armament with nuclear war as a deterrent. The British Council were not helping matters by suggesting in even the

¹⁰⁷ Vincent to Keighley, 4 November 1957, Box 14.

¹⁰⁸ BCC October 1957 Resolution, Box BCC/DIA/1/1/4.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Vincent to Keighley, 4 November 1957, Box 14.

slightest way that the Churches could see any but one way out of the stark alternative which faced the world.¹¹¹

Keighley, however, was not at all impressed by Vincent's reasoning and wrote a reply.¹¹² For Keighley, Vincent's argument rested on three erroneous premises. First, that once the WCC had spoken its message remained permanently relevant. Second, that when the WCC said something all the BCC should do was accept it. Finally, that the WCC Central Committee had really considered the issues represented by the limited war alternative. For Keighley, Vincent's third point was simply not true nor could he accept either of the other two:

When the Church in these days wants to say something about industry, it normally consults those who know something about industry, before doing it -- it has learned better than to pontificate in vacuo. Similarly in education and other fields -- why not in peace and war, i.e. defence, upon which the Churches are liable to pronounce more often than on any other subject. Pace Eric Baker, a considerable number at the Council meeting saw what we were trying to do. I will not discuss strategy with you except to say that you are seriously out of line with a good many people who know what they are talking about.¹¹³

Baker and Vincent were not the only people bothered by 'Buzzard's bombshell' at Council. Charles Judd, the Director General of the UN Association of Great Britain and Ireland, wrote Keighley¹¹⁴ inquiring whether or not Buzzard had made the impression which some reports suggested. For

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Keighley's reply to Vincent, 7 November 1957, Box 14.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Judd to Keighley, 5 November 1957, Box 14.

Judd it was a "great relief" to hear that the BCC approved of the CCIA and WCC statements which "...clearly go far beyond any plea for a restraint of the legal principles of a just war."¹¹⁵ Judd, however, requested access to any report on the discussion that followed Buzzard's speech to see if it might cast some light on the inwardness of the decision which followed (i.e. the setting up of a special group). Speaking for himself (for as an Association they had not studied Buzzard's proposals) "...I am completely unable to believe that -- if once the Great Powers were involved in war -- they would be able to limit themselves to the use of weapons of a certain size. All history suggests the contrary. With whatever good intentions (or wise intentions of self-interest) they started, one nation would always feel obliged to throw in everything it had in its armoury in order to avoid defeat or because it believed (perhaps quite wrongly) that the other side was about to overthrow all such restraints."¹¹⁶

Keighley's Support

Keighley wrote back¹¹⁷ saying he didn't know of any official report available of discussion that followed Buzzard's paper. Keighley was also puzzled by Judd's criticism. The BCC was only trying to understand what was going on and the issues involved by discussions with

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Keighley to Judd, 6 November 1957, Box 14.

experts. In part the invitation to Admiral Buzzard was an attempt to begin a process whereby this deficiency could be overcome.¹¹⁸ Keighley thought it clear that a great many people, including many Christians, were "bemused by the spectre of the hydrogen bomb" so that the ability to think clearly about day to day affairs of this-world had been impaired. Keighley could well understand the horror caused by any contemplation of what could happen and yet it would, he thought, be a clear advantage if the BCC could suggest to Christian people that this was not bound to happen and was not the only kind of war which could happen. To him this "existing paralysis" was no good for anybody. Keighley was at pains to draw Judd's attention to the fact that the Yale statements tried to survey the whole field of defence rather than singling out one issue.

Keighley also wondered if it was really true, as Judd had argued, that history suggested that those who go to war "throw in all they have almost automatically." His impression was that only this century had wars involved maximum force and unconditional surrender: "In any case, I think history is a bad guide because we have never before had the circumstances which obtain today, chief among which is that Russia, even if she should attain a very considerable superiority in arms, could never ignore the possibility, to put it no higher, that if nuclear war came,

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

she would herself be reduced to ruin and the leadership of the world pass to China or India. That, I should have thought, was the last thing Mr. Kruschchev would care to contemplate."¹¹⁹

Judd was perplexed that Keighley was surprised by his criticism.¹²⁰ He was not in the least puzzled by the fact that in various fields the Church had tried to understand what is going on and the issues involved, by discussion with experts, before delivering its mind. To Judd the more that was done by the Church the better. What concerned him was rather the reports that the Council had been so impressed by Buzzard's thesis, that minds and consciences were being prepared for a just war fought with nuclear weapons. For Judd this was wrong for three reasons: first, because he felt, once war between the major powers had started, any considerations would weigh in the balance against some power being the first to use, for an all-out blow, thermonuclear weapons; second, because military experts would probably admit this; and finally because it seemed to be a betrayal of the Christian faith to set out to condition people's minds to the possibilities of limited nuclear war when the whole effort of the Christian Church should surely be to convince every country that they must give the avoidance of war absolutely top priority.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Judd to Keighley, 8 November 1957, Box 14.

Judd noted however that the CCIA statement did, as the UNA had constantly urged, concern itself with the whole problem of disarmament. He agreed that nothing could be gained (and indeed much might be lost) in prohibiting atomic weapons unless it was part of a drastic curtailment of all weapons. Keighley was, he admitted, quite right to pull him up in his appeal to history -- between the wars of extermination there had certainly been more periods of civilised peace when totalitarian wars had not been waged, and when countries had not insisted on unconditional surrender. Did this necessarily mean: "...that the chariot, the bow, the cannon, the bombing aeroplane or any other weapon has been deliberately held back by any country when it felt its use would be to its advantage -- or, at any rate, that it is possible to think of more than the most infrequent exceptions?"¹²¹

Judd believed that neither the USA or the Soviets wanted to destroy themselves. Therein lay one of the world's chief hopes: that the logic of events was to agree to scrap the weapons all dreaded, because in retaining them there was always the risk that they would be used. The price of scrapping them however, was a drastic reduction in other weapons since the West would not abandon (for perfectly understandable reasons according to Judd) the weapon which it believed to be the chief deterrent to war until the

¹²¹ Ibid.

Soviet Union agreed to cut other forces and weapons in which it had such preponderance.¹²²

Keighley responded by sending Judd a copy of Buzzard's speech¹²³ and contending that it was a quite wrong impression to say that the Council has committed itself to Buzzard's thesis. The Group had been set up to discuss the moral aspects of disarmament with Buzzard and some of his colleges, though these were not being invited because they shared the same strategic views. Keighley argued that many people would not share Judd's view that war between the major powers would inevitably lead to the use of thermonuclear weapons, and thought they were obviously consulting different groups of military experts. He strenuously rejected the accusation that the BCC were conditioning people's minds to the possibilities of a nuclear *just war* being fought. Whilst the position of some was "that all war is contrary to the spirit and teaching of Jesus Christ. The Church should teach that and should never relax from teaching it, but if the Church is to say anything at all to the situation of this day and generation as it finds it, then it must try and say something very practical. It does not seem to me to be an immoral approach to gain an ultimate end by a number of steps rather than by one great big and impossible one."¹²⁴ To Keighley it seemed that the

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Keighley to Judd, 14 November 1957, Box 14.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

Church was not fulfilling its duty if it carried on repeating that war was contrary to the spirit and teaching of Jesus Christ. What was needed were some practical steps towards easing tension. This was what the BCC were aiming to help achieve. As to whether states in war would always throw everything they had got Keighley felt not in a position to argue with knowledge, however he did feel that many who were better informed would support him: "I think our difficulty is plainly not understanding the way we each think the Church can best act in the present situation. I do not think we have any disagreement as to her ultimate task."¹²⁵

Robert Mackie wrote to Bishop Bell¹²⁶ (Bell had been too ill to attend Assembly) informing him of the discussion at the October meeting and of the line being taken. Mackie wanted to say how inexperienced he felt with regards to the BCC. He found it quite a different body to the WCC: "I never know how the discussion is likely to go. Also we meet for such a short time that it is impossible for any issue really to be thrashed out adequately. I am afraid therefore that some people were upset by the handling of the discussion at the last meeting. On the whole, however, I feel that we came out of it a real step forward."¹²⁷ Mackie informed Bell that it was only the lack of discussion time after Buzzard's

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Mackie to Bell, 15 November 1957, Box 14.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

speech that meant the WCC resolution was not adequately discussed. He apologised for this but also he felt the BCC had did all that was asked of it (i.e. welcoming the resolution and passing it on to Government). The real step forward came from Grubb's motion where the International Department was asked to set up a special group of its own members with strategic and political experts.¹²⁸

Conclusion

This Chapter developed the proposition that the controversy surrounding the failure to secure a H-bomb test ban, rather than the immorality of massive retaliation as such, brought the BCC to a considered attention of strategic policy. The BCC view since 1946 had given primary attention to the need to maintain deterrence, and the need to halt or reverse nuclear proliferation. This was for two reasons. On one hand, the Council's Officers were keenly aware that many Christians felt that nuclear weapons, and in particular thermonuclear weapons, were abhorrent and immoral. This sense was only exacerbated when considered from the perspective of Britain's nuclear strategy as outlined in Duncan Sandys' 1957 White Paper *Defence: Outline of Future Policy*. Yet on the other hand, the Council's Officers felt unable to disavow nuclear devices and condone nuclear

¹²⁸ Ibid.

abstention. This brought into question the manner with which the BCC had approached the nuclear dilemma.

The International Department was increasingly relied upon to speak on behalf of the Churches. To this extent its Officers recognised their potential radically to affect not only the terms with which the nuclear debate was conducted, but perhaps also the attitudes of the individual Churches for whom they spoke. It would be difficult to underestimate the Department's responsibility on these terms. Yet the impression is that the International Department had begun as an amalgamation of several interests, like the Council as a whole, and had become more ecclesiological and conservative with the passage of time. The Council's Officers concluded that a constructive nuclear policy offered the most politically sensitive yet ethical alternative to an unpalatable situation. For these reasons Rear Admiral Sir Anthony Buzzard was invited into BCC circles. A more considered approach from the BCC began with Buzzard presenting his limited war thesis to the Council meeting of October 1957.

Buzzard introduced to the BCC the novel idea that nuclear weapons on their own would not deter but that they could, nonetheless, be part of a Christian just war approach. He advocated both the retention of nuclear weapons and a more credible strategy for their use if deterrence should fail. Whilst Buzzard avowed that a nuclear capability did not

necessarily mean nuclear weapons would be used if deterrence failed this, of course, was a matter of political judgement. To counter his proposition with the argument that there was no adequate defence against nuclear weapons was really to miss the point. Buzzard's realism was not separated from the Manichean advocacy of massive retaliation through moral evaluation alone but by, and more fundamentally, an understanding of the nature of war itself. To Buzzard acts of thermonuclear ('strategic') violence simply surpassed the boundaries of war as 'rational' activity. Indeed, his *de facto* claim that a war waged with 'tactical' (i.e. non-thermonuclear) devices could be rational began with the assumption that the State did not necessarily need to limit itself to trying to avoid nuclear confrontation. Buzzard's conviction about the need to limit strategic nuclear devices was henceforth less moral evaluation and more a function of his belief that, given the nature of international affairs, war was unavoidable. For him disarmament and defence were part of the same paradigm because, following classical realist logic, if peace is desired a State must prepare for war. Buzzard's speech made a dramatic impact on BCC attitudes. Its main corollary was that a Study Group on the Moral Aspects of Disarmament was formed.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

THE MORAL ASPECTS OF DISARMAMENT 1957-58

Introduction

On the 14th November 1957¹ the International Department Chair, Robert Mackie, together with Kenneth Slack (the BCC General Secretary) and Alan Keighley (the DIA Secretary) met to discuss the Council's October request that the "International Department set up a special group from its own membership and from people related to defence policy which would give continuous study to the moral aspects of the disarmament problem and of defence policy in the light of nuclear armament". Here Mackie officially² entrusted Keighley and Slack with the task of forming the Group, the choosing of personnel and agenda setting. Keighley (who became the Group's secretary) Slack quickly recruited Admiral Buzzard's friend Alan Booth³ (London Secretary of the CCIA), the experienced Rev. Dr. Norman Goodall⁴ (the

¹ See Minutes dated 14 November 1957 in BCC Box 14.

² Mackie makes clear this task was discharged to Keighley and Slack in a letter to Keighley dated 19 November 1957. See BCC Box 14.

³ Letter of invitation written by Keighley to Booth, 19 November 1957, BCC Box 14.

⁴ Goodall had served on the BCC commission that produced *The Era of Atomic Power* in 1946 and was also Chair of the DIA from 1945-46. A letter from Goodall to Keighley dated 21 November 1957 shows however, that he was less than enthusiastic about the current venture. Goodall wrote: "I wish you would consider putting someone else in my place on the Disarmament Group, partly because of...difficulties in attendance,

Secretary of the Joint Committee of the IMC and the WCC), and Canon Herbert Waddams (General Secretary of the Church of England's Council on Foreign Relations) as the new Group's 'staff team.' The consequences of this were to lead the DIA and, indirectly the BCC, to being involved in more continuous consideration of the problems of defence and disarmament. Alan Booth noted⁵ that people in the post-Brighton Conference discussions particularly welcomed the focusing of Christian judgement in this area. Buzzard's speech had been the catalyst that turned the BCC to consider views that appreciated "the complexity of the problems facing those concerned with defence"⁶. This chapter examines the formation of the Study Group and its subsequent processes and method.

Part I: The Formation of a Study Group

Whilst Robert Mackie had delegated recruiting to his staff team he did feel any action must first be prefaced by

but chiefly because I feel completely at a loss for bringing to the group any fresh light on this baffling business." Yet the Group's 'staff team' persisted. Keighley replied with a letter on the 26 November, which regretted Goodall's reluctance to join the Group and asked Goodall to reconsider. The organisers felt Goodall "would be able to contribute out of a very wide ecumenical awareness, particularly of the approach and feeling of people in Africa and Asia, and that you would bring to meetings a particular theological approach which it was felt indispensable to have represented." Keighley argued it was very difficult to find anyone else fulfilling these requirements with anything like Goodall's abilities. Goodall consequently "reluctantly accepted" the invitation in a letter to Keighley (27 November 1957) but still felt someone with more conviction than himself was needed to answer the problem implied by the Group's criteria. Above correspondence in BCC Box 14.

⁵ Mackie paraphrases Booth in his letter to Bell, 15 November 1957, BCC Box 14.

⁶ Minutes of International Department meeting dated 10th December 1957, Box BCC/DIA/1/1/4.

a strong statement about the avoidance of war. Mackie's view was that the new Group should primarily build on the sentiments expressed by the Yale statements the foundation that advocated the banning of nuclear weapons testing.⁷ In this way Mackie showed himself sensitive to the controversy that surrounded Admiral Buzzard's paper and keen to remedy the lack of BCC discussion of the Yale resolutions. Buzzard's second point⁸ was for Mackie "his best point"⁹ and the most effective way forward for the Group. It wasn't that Mackie felt the Group should condone the limited war thesis as such, it was rather that Mackie thought Buzzard's approach to be useful in discussing how the just war could be upheld without resorting to massive retaliation. For Mackie this would still allow for various contrary points of view to be expressed. Whilst it seems individual Church leaders had little of note to add to the tumultuous events of 1957, it was the place where some sort of answer could be given to the King-Halls¹⁰ and the Priestleys¹¹ (i.e. radical unilateralists).

⁷ Mackie wrote: "I always take this for granted, but now I see (i.e. referring to the controversy surrounding Buzzard's speech) that lots of people think you have forgotten if you do not restate it." See Mackie's letter to Keighley dated 19 November 1957, BCC Box 14.

⁸ i.e. that the West should try to ease the arms race in total war weapons, by openly accepting the global balance of power, and stating that only enough of these weapons will be kept to make the prospect of total global war thoroughly repugnant. Buzzard's second point involved the West stating that they were no longer prepared to fight such a war to the finish, nor spend the resources preparing for it.

⁹ Mackie to Keighley, 19 November 1957, BCC Box 14.

¹⁰ Mackie refers to Commander Sir Stephen King-Hall's call in April 1957 for the instigation of a Royal Commission to study the possibilities of unarmed resistance as a national policy. King-Hall, a retired naval officer and former independent National MP, was the publisher of a somewhat idiosyncratic but widely read Newsletter. He

Mackie wanted to accommodate recent theoretical developments in 'peace circles' and thought they were compatible, not mutually exclusive to, Buzzard's limited war thesis. He felt confident that the conflict between traditions was not insurmountable. It was the sum of these contributions that raised the question, for Mackie the key question, whether "... we must either become pacifists or cynics? I think this is our real job and the place where we should try to help the men who are involved in the defence of our country."¹² Mackie was certain that such a task could not be carried out in abstract terms: "Ought something to be thought and perhaps said about the strategy of not being engulfed by world communism?"¹³ He was also aware that the BCC, acting as national representatives of an international ecumenical body should not be tactless and uncompromisingly Western in its bias.

Mackie's sensitivities were reaffirmed when the Protestant Churches of Czechoslovakia¹⁴ passed a resolution

was also a nuclear pacifist who believed the possibility of nuclear obliteration now made armed defence redundant. Driver 1964, pp.326-54 considers King-Hall's role in the peace movement. King-Hall summarised his beliefs in his *Defence in the Nuclear Age* (1958).

¹¹ Mackie was clearly aware of the play-wright's recent (November 2 1957) *New Statesmen* article "Britain and the Nuclear Bombs". This article is frequently cited as the catalyst for CND. For detail on content and significance see Driver 1964, pp.37-8; Groom 1974, pp.331-32; Taylor 1988, p.20; and Veldman 1994, p.148 also agree with Driver's assessment. It is, however, surprising that the otherwise fastidious Driver gets the date of such an important article wrong: Driver dates the article February 2 1957, not the correct November 2 1957.

¹² Mackie to Keighley, 19 November 1957, BCC Box 14.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Like the BCC, a WCC Associated Council.

in early December 1957.¹⁵ The Eastern Europeans challenged Western Churches to join them in condemning and rejecting all nuclear weapons. The Churches called on Christians throughout the world to join together and impress upon humanity that the use of nuclear weapons -- even their testing -- threatened the continued existence of civilisation. The Czechs called for the exertion of the greatest endeavours to see that nuclear energy was utilised for the good of all humanity. They also called on theologians to work out clear theologically based standpoints on the question of peace and war, and weapons of mass destruction.¹⁶

Mackie found it was not just Church leaders from behind the Iron Curtain who held such sentiments. The Executive of Manchester, Salford and District Council of Churches (a BCC constituent) urged similar activism on the British Council.¹⁷ The Executive abhorred war as a means of international policy and called upon Christian people in the Soviet Union, the United States, France and Britain to impress upon their governments the need to resolve the issues that divided the world by peaceful means. The Resolution: "...commends to the attention of member churches the urgent and important questions raised by present campaigns for nuclear disarmament and urges Christians to

¹⁵ Resolution of the National Conference of Church Workers, dated 3-4th December 1957, BCC Box 14.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Executive resolution not dated but early December 1957, BCC Box 14.

make known a responsible political choice between specific policies leading towards the abolition of weapons of mass destruction."¹⁸

Recruitment Begins

In accordance with the Assembly's request, and mindful of Mackie's initial recommendations, the Study Group's staff team began their recruitment drive. Although Keighley, Slack, Booth, Goodall and Waddams were all Group officials, the actual task of finding enthusiastic members fell largely to an 'inner circle' staff team comprising just Alan Keighley and Alan Booth. It was thought that a balanced group of five or six people, representing the various schools of strategic thinking, were needed to speak on behalf of those "people related to defence policy."¹⁹ Admiral Buzzard appears as the first and obvious choice.²⁰ The Admiral thought the 'special Group' only needed his limited war camp-follower Michael Howard²¹ (lecturer in War

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Keighley uses this phrase in his various letters of invitation. All letters in BCC Box 14.

²⁰ There is no record of any member of the 'staff-team' questioning Buzzard's inclusion. Perhaps this should not be surprising considering the Group's foundation was a consequence of Buzzard's paper at Council and a resolution that called for the setting up of a "a special group from its own (i.e. DIA) membership and from people related to defence policy".

²¹ Howard was about to become particularly well-known in British strategic-political circles thanks to a influential book (see Howard 1958, commentary in Groom 1974, pp.369-70) that called on the Soviet and Western powers to 'disengage' foreign troops from both Eastern Europe and Germany. Howard's own view was "that the Russian leaders have abandoned none of their belief in the historic mission of communism to conquer the world and in their personal responsibility to ensure that it does. But it is a conquest of which in the long run they feel certain and for which they are prepared to wait... A relaxation of military precautions would be permissible if it led to compensating economic or

Studies at King's College) and himself as defence experts.²² Buzzard was of the opinion that himself and Howard would be the only two strategists prepared to be permanent members although others might come to single meetings to act as witnesses. To Keighley²³ this surprising suggestion made it desirable to have one other permanent member from outside the Admiral's circle. Booth, however, thought that among his correspondents the only possibility was the unavailable Alastair Buchan.²⁴

Mackie was nonetheless alarmed²⁵ that Buzzard thought he and Howard were sufficient defence experts for the Group's purposes. Mackie was adamant that the Group should contain a much wider opinion than limited war strategists and thought it very important that among the technical experts who were members they should have diversity of view. Although he did not rule out Buzzard's thesis he was keen that there should be some 'expert' who disagreed with Buzzard. Booth tried to reassure Mackie that Howard was not a Buzzardist²⁶ but Mackie felt the differences so slight to

political advantages, but it remains essential to retain some degree of 'deterrence' to discourage Russian leaders from taking unwise risks. It is in this context that the question of 'disengagement' must be examined" (Howard 1958, pp.22-4). To Howard such a policy of 'disengagement' would serve as a form of arms control whilst avoiding the sensitivity of the test ban issue.

²² Keighley informs Mackie of Buzzard's attitude in a letter dated 27 November 1957. BCC Box 14.

²³ Keighley informs Mackie of Buzzard's attitude in a letter dated 27 November 1957. BCC Box 14.

²⁴ Defence correspondent of *The Observer*, and sympathetic to Buzzard's strategy.

²⁵ See u.d. memo (early November 1957) from Mackie to Keighley, BCC Box 14.

²⁶ See the long detailed letter from Booth to Mackie, 4 December 1957, BCC Box 14.

be insignificant. Mackie was sure that "If we (the Group) can't get that (a opposite view to Buzzard), I'm inclined to soft-pedal....This is not to stop us doing what we are doing, but to warn us that we must not appear to have fallen into a trap."²⁷ Keighley had, however, succeeded in recruiting the Labour MP Geoffrey de Frietas, Under Secretary for Air, 1946-50.²⁸ Roy Lewis, a military writer on *The Economist*, had also shown a willingness to support the Group's work,²⁹ and this meant for Booth at least, that Mackie should be rest assured that the Group would not be delivered into the hands of the Admiral. Mackie was not convinced. For him sufficient ideological balancing could only be achieved if the seasoned peace warrior the Bishop of Chichester, George Bell joined the Group.³⁰

Bell's Concerns

As we have seen Bishop Bell, whilst not an absolute pacifist, had become a stout advocate of the nuclear pacifist position. The choice, although potentially promising in creating a balance with the Buzzardists, was not popular with Booth. Booth saw Bell's inclusion unnecessary and thought Mackie was worrying needlessly about

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ de Frietas accepted the invitation in a letter to Keighley, 21 January 1958, BCC Box 14.

²⁹ Booth informs Mackie that Roy Lewis was keen to support the Group as he saw himself as a "...buttress of the Church, i.e. supporter from outside, and would like to see Church having something useful to say." Booth's letter to Mackie dated 4 December 1957, BCC Box 14.

³⁰ Keighley's various letters of invitation made clear this was Mackie's decision alone. See BCC Box 14.

ideological balancing.³¹ Robert Mackie soon found himself under considerable pressure from the Bishop not to let the Group discuss the Buzzard thesis lest it deviate them from pure disarmament arguments. Bell's attitude was driven by both his attitude to the idea of a nuclear *just war* and by his understanding of what had happened when Buzzard's paper had been presented to the BCC in October. The Bishop's concerns were based on his impression that many at the autumn Council meeting were disappointed that attention had been diverted from the Yale statements to the Buzzard theme. Bell shared this disappointment.

A Quaker delegate from the Council meeting, Margaret Hobling, reaffirmed Bell's impression when she urged the staff team³² to be cautious in their programme and to remember that there was still some disappointment in BCC circles regarding the time devoted to Buzzard's thesis at the October meeting. Council delegates were particularly disappointed that subsequent time constraints had prevented a BCC statement being prepared which could have been forward to the British government, independent of the Yale statements.³³ It was Alan Keighley's contention, however, that Council officers present at Yale had spoken to him with a sense of relief that the BCC were no longer talking in

³¹ This suggests clearly much about Booth's own ideological predisposition. Booth to Mackie, 4 December 1957, BCC Box 14.

³² Keighley repeats Hobling's conversation in a letter to Mackie on the 27th November 1957. See BCC Box 14.

³³ See detail and Prime Minister Macmillan's reply in Chapter Four.

general principles, but seeking with the help of the new Group to find out what actually was happening:

Admittedly it (the Council's Yale statement debate) was not a good discussion. I find it very difficult to see how you can get a good discussion on such complex and vital matters in such hurried meetings. My particular disappointment was in the letters I received from Central Committee (i.e. WCC) members. It was pretty clear that few of them saw that voting for the resolution in Yale implied serious consideration of what the churches in this country should do. It confirms me in my opinion that resolutions of that kind have a soporific effect upon the churches, and no effect at all upon the governments.³⁴

For Keighley those present at the meeting of the WCC Central Committee had also spoken of a long and often difficult discussion that had occurred before their August 1957 resolution could be drafted. For Keighley it would have been clearly irresponsible for the BCC, without going through a similar exercise, to seek to have anything of its own to add. Keighley was a practical man who wanted to wake the Churches from their stupor and offer Government constructive advice. Buzzard's four proposals³⁵ in this sense not only sought to close the gap between Church opinion and the formation of defence policy, but had succeeded, as *The Times*³⁶ averred, in having a "stunning effect" on the Council's attitudes. It was Keighley's hope

³⁴ See letter from Keighley to Bishop Bell dated 4 December 1957, BCC Box 14.

³⁵ i.e. (i) re-stating the principles of the just war; (ii) persuading the West to accept the global balance of power; (iii) restoring the local balance of power by explaining to the public why limited nuclear war might have to be initiated in particular circumstances; and (iv) help to persuade the West to a 'no first use policy' with regards to the H-bomb.

³⁶ 23 October 1957.

that the British Churches, through the Group, would now be able to give serious consideration to defence issues in a way they had not before. As Group Secretary he saw his sole task as helping the Churches in Britain formulate a joint and informed policy on nuclear matters.

With regard to Admiral Buzzard's gradualism, Keighley thought that his presence at Council and in the Group "does not of course mean that in any sense we have adopted his thesis."³⁷ The time devoted to Buzzard's paper at the Council meeting was simply testimony to its intellectual coherence not wide spread validity. Keighley saw Buzzard's value as that of a Christian lay-member trying to relate Christian teaching to the problems with which he was involved. His principal desire was to enable a group to be formed of such character. The time spent discussing the Admiral's thesis at Council should not be held against him. Keighley was aware that different Church leaders were saying different things and this made it difficult to help the Council (through the Group) speak with a considered judgement. It was thus better to have a vocal and passionate unilateralist like Bell inside rather than outside the Group. Such an approach was akin to that of the Prime Minister who includes a bothersome 'back-bencher' in Government to keep them quiet and placate potentially divisive sectional interests. This did not mean that

³⁷ Keighley to Bishop Bell dated 4th December 1957, BCC Box 14.

Keighley saw himself driven unconditionally to support the Buzzard approach. The distance between Buzzard and Bell were seen as differences of means not ends. It was these practical considerations that shaped Keighley's attitude to Bell.³⁸

Whilst Keighley tried to reassure Bell about the Group's impartiality towards multilateralist approaches, Booth was rather less diplomatic and more direct. Alan Booth contended that the Bishop of Chichester's intervention was an attempt to sabotage the Group's work before it began.³⁹ When Sir Kenneth Grubb, Chair of the CCIA (who along with Bishop Bell and Norman Goodall had served on the Commission that had produced the BCC's 1946 *Era of Atomic Power* report⁴⁰) was recruited, he too supported the views of Booth. Grubb shared many of Booth's beliefs⁴¹ and was very influential with Mackie by virtue of his being a ex-Chair of the International Department (1947-56).

Grubb used his influence to reinforce the consensus that persuaded Robert Mackie not to listen unduly to the Bishop's

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ A revealing view which sums up the attitude which dominated the Group's 'staff-team'. Booth wrote (with reference to Bell) "...I do not think you should worry about...the Admiral. We (Booth and Grubb) are not quite sure what Chichester has said to you.. Is he trying to sink the ship?". Booth to Mackie, 4 December 1957, BCC Box 14.

⁴⁰ Bell, Grubb and Goodall were the three Group members with experience of this first BCC Report. Bell would eventually resign from the Buzzard Group, Goodall was reluctant to join in the first place, whilst Grubb went on to serve on the 1961 BCC Commission that produced *The Valley of Decision*.

⁴¹ It should be remembered that Booth was also London Secretary of the CCIA. Grubb as Chair of the CCIA, clearly shared with Booth a common bond.

concerns. It was Bell, Grubb would point out, who in fact introduced Buzzard to the CCIA (and consequently BCC) circles in the first place.⁴²

For Bishop Bell the real challenge before the Group was not a discussion of the ways in which Buzzard's thesis could be transformed into a Christian nuclear judgement. Buzzard's thesis was not just quantitatively, but qualitatively different to what he envisioned a Christian approach to be. Bell called for a choice to be made between specific policies leading to nuclear disarmament. Yet these differences could not be reconciled by simple debate.

Recruitment Continues

Soon after Sir Kenneth Grubb was recruited, Dr. Kenneth Johnstone⁴³ (Chair of the Christian Frontier Council), and the Rev. Edward Rogers⁴⁴ (General Secretary of the Methodist Conference's Christian Citizenship Department) were approached and recruited. It was decided that the Group needed a 'representative theologian'⁴⁵ to balance the military experts. This posed problems. The staff team's first choice was the respected radical theologian Canon

⁴² Booth informs Mackie of Grubb's attitude in 4 December 1957 letter, BCC Box 14.

⁴³ Johnstone would also eventually help produce the BCC's 1961 *Valley of Decision* and 1963 *British Nuclear Deterrent Reports*.

⁴⁴ Rogers would serve in the BCC working group that produced the *British Nuclear Deterrent* in 1963.

⁴⁵ It should be remembered that the commission that was formed to prepare *The Era of Atomic Power* report in 1946 was comprised of three academic theologians/philosophers (i.e. Dr. Newton Flew, Donald Mackinnon, and Professor Ritchie).

Vidler.⁴⁶ When Vidler declined their invitation, Professor Richardson was approached,⁴⁷ when Richardson refused⁴⁸ a invitation to the Rev. Daniel Jenkins⁴⁹, Professor of Theology in the University of Chicago was forwarded. The Group was relieved when Jenkins accepted the invitation, and turned to a hesitant Alasdair MacIntyre, political theorist at Leeds University, to add philosophical depth.⁵⁰

The Group officials tried also to recruit an expert on international law.⁵¹ Gerald Draper, lecturer at King's College, was approached. Draper rejected the Group's request with a scathing attack on Christian subservience.⁵² This attack is relevant and worth repeating to illustrate the problems the Group had in being taken as a serious 'open' concern. Draper declared that war had been a respectable Christian activity since the conversion of the Emperor Constantine and why nuclear war should present any particular difficulty for the Christian Churches eluded him.

⁴⁶ Editor of the Anglican journal *Theology* (1939-64). Edwin Robertson (1989, p.463) notes that Vidler's keen mind penetrated so many discussions on peace, justice, nuclear weapons, the welfare state etc. in the Fifties and Sixties that if he were not present at an important discussion you needed to ask why.

⁴⁷ Keighley to Richardson, 26th November 1957, BCC Box 14.

⁴⁸ Booth informed Mackie of Richardson's decision (no reason given) 4th December 1957, BCC Box 14.

⁴⁹ Jenkins, a close friend of Booth, became an important advocate of the limited war approach through his articles in the journal *Theology* (e.g. June 1961) testify.

⁵⁰ MacIntyre informs us that he was hesitant for both political and moral reasons -- his politics were too radical and his attitude to nuclear weapons pacifist. This is supported by his decision to support CND after his eventual resignation. See MacIntyre's resignation letter to Keighley, 19 April 1958, BCC Box 14.

⁵¹ A practical necessity if Buzzard's first proposal (the re-stating of the just war theory) was to be acted upon in a professional manner.

⁵² Draper to Keighley, 24 January 1958, BCC Box 14.

He doubted whether he had much to offer and suggested the issues before the Group had created no new problem for the Church. For Draper the Churches had found little difficulty in anathematising sexual deviation so let the Churches apply the same approach: "The history of the Church might be 'the long war on Sex and the long peace with War.'" ⁵³

The National Peace Council (NPC) were, however, keen once more to offer their services to the BCC. Eric Baker as General Secretary, approached Keighley ⁵⁴ suggesting that the Group's work would benefit from close contacts (formal or otherwise) with the NPC. Baker wondered whether the Group might bring in Kenneth Ingram ⁵⁵ the well known and respected lay member of the Anglican Church. Ingram was vice-chair of the Peace Council and whilst not a pacifist he was very near to this position. ⁵⁶ Keighley seemed initially quite sympathetic to this suggestion ⁵⁷ but after discussion with Booth rejected Baker's overtures. ⁵⁸ The reasons given were that although it was accepted the Peace Council had great experience, the Group feared if it began consulting various bodies who had something to contribute they should have to initiate a programme they would be unable to cope with. It

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Eric Baker to Keighley, 13 January 1958, BCC Box 14.

⁵⁵ In 1937 Ingram had published a book called *Christianity -- Right or Left?* in which he argued that the Churches had no alternative but to choose the hard left in the struggles between Communism and Fascism.

⁵⁶ Presumably this meant Ingram was at least a nuclear pacifist.

⁵⁷ Keighley pencilled "Ingram: free lance author, political interests, independent means, leftish, travelled, balanced judgement." See comments on Baker's letter to Keighley, 13 January 1958, BCC Box 14.

⁵⁸ See Keighley to Baker, 22 January 1958, BCC Box 14.

was better not to start along such a line.⁵⁹ It was also argued that as the BCC regarded itself as a consultative body of its member Churches, the question of relations with the NPC was a matter for each Church to decide for itself. Although the stated reasons for refusing the NPC's offer are legitimate enough, it is certainly true that the Council's exclusion served to strengthen the established bias in the Group and allow the development of a strong Buzzard approach.

By February 1958 the Group's staff team were at one in agreeing that a sufficiently balanced membership had been achieved and that it was no longer necessary to seek new members.⁶⁰ This meant there were sixteen Group members: Robert Mackie (Chair), Bishop Bell, Alan Booth, Admiral Buzzard, Geoffrey de Freitas MP, Rev. Dr. Goodall, Sir Kenneth Grubb, Michael Howard, Rev. Dr. Jenkins, Dr. Ken Johnstone, Roy Lewis, Alasdair MacIntyre, Rev. Rogers, Canon Waddams, Kenneth Slack and Alan Keighley (Secretary). The Group was mainly made up of ecumenical 'insiders' and people actively related to the formation of defence (as opposed to disarmament) policy.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ The minutes of the second meeting of the Study Group on the Moral Aspects of Disarmament meeting of 17 February 1958 make it clear that the consensus of opinion was in favour of supporting the view that 'diversity of opinion' had now been achieved. See minutes in BCC Box 14.

Escaping the Hiroshima or Belsen Dichotomy

The first meeting of the Group on the Moral Aspects of Disarmament was held on the 11th December 1957 in the BCC's London Council Room. Robert Mackie remind the Group of its terms of reference which was to advise the BCC from time to time, and not to produce a single lengthy report. The Chair outlined the events which had led to the passing of the autumn 1957 resolution, describing the debate at the spring meeting of the BCC Council, the statements made by the Executive Committee of the CCIA and the Central Committee of the WCC at Yale in the summer of 1957. Copies of Prime Minister Macmillan's reply and his comments on the statements of the CCIA and the WCC were put before the Group for discussion.

The Group's initial meeting inclined to suggest that the real problem created by the dilemma of nuclear war was not in determining how evil war was but rather how to tackle the injustice which lay behind it. There was consensus on the Augustinian dictum that the realm of war was necessarily the realm of evil.⁶¹ It was appropriate to first assert Mackie's wishes that all war be seen as contrary to the spirit, teaching and purpose of Jesus Christ. The ultimate purpose for all Christians was to avoid war and help achieve total disarmament. In contradistinction to Bell's approach,

⁶¹ Minutes of the First Meeting of the Group on the Moral Aspects of Disarmament, 11 December 1957, BCC Box 14.

the differences between the pacifist and *just war* approaches to war were defined as differences of means rather than of ends. This was because both traditions agreed war was evil and only disagreed as to whether war should be considered a necessary evil.⁶² The Group could not reach agreement as to whether nuclear weapons were different in kind, or degree. Whilst they accepted that 'total destruction' was now possible, lack of agreement on whether nuclear weapons were qualitatively or quantitatively different made it difficult to demand a radical review of the traditional Christian debate towards war. It was decided that the Group's task best be discharged by rejecting the dilemma between 'Hiroshima or Belsen.'⁶³ This meant escaping from discussing in what circumstances nuclear war should be endured, and at what point Christians should think it preferable to submit rather than provoke nuclear war. A consensus in the Group asserted that most Christians agreed that the British government should be in a position to resist aggression, this was not withstanding the recognition that some could not assent to this out of deep Christian conviction. For the Group the main point of issue was not deciding between 'Hiroshima or Belsen' but rather deciding (as Mackie wished⁶⁴) how 'justice' could be upheld, and minor aggression prevented or resisted without the risk of

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ As illustrated in shown in Mackie's letter to Keighley, 19 November 1957, BCC Box 14.

involving the total destruction of mankind. The question, however, was war the ultimate evil? Many felt Soviet Communism was one threat that could kill the soul as well as body.⁶⁵ The threat was not so much that of territorial aggression, but that Christianity in the West and elsewhere may be engulfed by an anti-Christian system and ideology.⁶⁶ The Group determined to devise an appropriate Christian strategy in this Manichean context.

Following from this it was only logical for the Group to discuss what attitude Christians should hold towards potential opponents. This would involve discussion of what submission to the Soviet bloc would imply. Yet the meeting's minutes show that the Group did realise that there was a danger in always equating human progress with the values of Christianity.⁶⁷ The consequences of this was that the division between East and West should be seen as relative -- a distinction the Group felt Christians should be able to recognise more easily than others. Echoing George Kennan's Reith lecture sentiments⁶⁸, the attitude was

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Minutes of the First Meeting of the Group on the Moral Aspects of Disarmament, 11 December 1957, BCC Box 14.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ i.e. *Russia, the Atom and the West* where Kennan targeted Manichean moralism, the worth of nuclear weapons, the logic of the arms-race, and offered a new perspective on the Cold War and the role of the West there in. Kennan, the United States Ambassador to Moscow from 1952 to 1953, was a devout Christian and active producer of 'Christian Realist' contributions to international politics. He favoured diplomacy instead of balance of power politics and serves as a good example of how subscription to realism does not necessarily lead to the same conclusions about nuclear policy. Indeed, Kennan's approach acknowledged the obsolescence of the nation-state as guarantor of survival and gave new life to Kantian universalism. Besides *Russia, the Atom and the West* (published by Oxford University Press in 1958) his most significant contribution was *Foreign Policy and Christian*

that the West should be grateful that the 'Russians' were making progress. A hysterical competitiveness with the Soviets was accepted as wrong. What was required was for Christians to enable the conditions in which it was seen as worthwhile to maintain the balance of power, rather than disrupt it.⁶⁹ This task included taking account of the psychological difficulty of convincing the East that the West had a sincere desire for peace. It also needed a modification in the fear and lack of understanding which were prevalent in Christian attitudes towards Communism.

The problems raised by such thinking on the Communist 'threat' were seen in terms of defence rather than arguments for and against disarmament. The accepted attitude was that discussions of defence were seen as logically preceding discussions of disarmament since the latter was based on the former. It was this approach that was necessary in order to discover a distinctively Christian approach to disarmament.⁷⁰ It was also the approach Bishop Bell had tried to prevent. Here the debate could only naturally move beyond disarmament to Buzzard's realist analysis of the strategic implications of the contemporary 'balance of power'. This meant discussing the likely impact of gestures

Conscience (Philadelphia: Peace Education Programme, American Friends Service Committee, 1959). See Hare and Joynt 1982, pp.42-6 for a discussion of Kennan's moral realism and his support for a nuclear just war theory. Also Smith 1986.

⁶⁹ Minutes of the First Meeting of the Group on the Moral Aspects of Disarmament, 11 December 1957, BCC Box 14.

⁷⁰ Minutes of the First Meeting of the Group on the Moral Aspects of Disarmament, 11 December 1957, BCC Box 14.

such as the limited unilateral suspension or cessation of tests. Buzzard and Howard wanted to stress that they felt the invocation of the risk of thermonuclear war in fact affected military credibility.⁷¹ This approach saw the H-bomb as a consequence, not so much morally repugnant, but as strategically inadvisable. Here policy makers would be called upon to realise that there was no need, from a strict military point of view, to be always a step ahead of other powers (still less to possess the ultimate deterrent -- the H-bomb) in order to be in a position to make major aggression not worth while. The committee believed the NATO powers could do this already. There was, therefore, no need to continue hydrogen bomb tests. The NATO powers could afford to suspend tests, unilaterally if necessary, without losing the power of major deterrence. Nuclear deterrence still formed the appropriate basis for British defence. Unilateral action here was not the same unilateral action demanded by Bell and MacIntyre. When Buzzard and his supporters talked of 'unilateralism' they didn't mean non-contingent renunciation, but rather a small step that would materially lower tension and provide some ground for hope in a particular and specific circumstance.⁷² Contingency plans for the possibility of limited nuclear war were still to be made.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² This approach would form the basis of the argument presented by the Church of England in their seminal 1982 report *The Church and the Bomb*.

The meeting concluded with the question raised as to what end product was desirable from such discussion. The Group's remit was not to produce a report in order to inform British public, or even Christian opinion. At this time it was felt highly unlikely that the Group's discussions would result in producing a sizeable pamphlet.⁷³ The purpose of the committee was to produce considered judgements on which they could advise the Council from time to time.⁷⁴ The Council was the only audience the Group was concerned with. Nevertheless, it was still necessary to decide how 'considered judgements' and the basis on which they had been arrived at, be presented to Council frequently enough in order to ensure that the two bodies did not get out of step. No answer was given to this outstanding logistical problem.

Part II: Group Processes

At the end of the first meeting of the Study Group Mackie had suggested it would be useful to invite Dr. Robert Bilheimer,⁷⁵ Associate General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, to the next meeting of the Group in order to outline one possible ecumenical approach to

⁷³ Minutes of the First Meeting of the Group on the Moral Aspects of Disarmament, 11 December 1957, BCC Box 14.

⁷⁴ Refer to the text and discussion of the Council's Autumn 1957 resolution above.

⁷⁵ Dr. Bilheimer was the driving force behind the WCC Report *Christians and the Prevention of War in a Atomic Age* (WCC Press, 1958). Although this report was the result of a international commission appointed in 1955 Bilheimer was given major credit for its authorship. This approach served as an important influence in the production of the Group's own report *Christians and Atomic War* in 1959.

Christian thinking about nuclear weapons. The second meeting of the Study Group was largely dominated by the Rev. Dr. Robert Bilheimer's ideas. Mackie hoped Bilheimer would help focus attention and serve as a useful basis for continued discussion.

For Bilheimer the basic problem created by nuclear power was not political but essentially scientific. Science and technology were impersonal yet dynamic processes. Each process was inherently dynamic because each new scientific or technological discovery inevitably led to the next advance. This dynamic was irreversible -- once a discovery was made it could not be ignored. Whilst the impersonal processes of science and technology were not neutral they were made ambiguous by the nature of the human responses they elicited.⁷⁶ Unfortunately human attitudes to science and technology were all too often idolatrous. Because Christians had not established the right relationship with science and technology, they had become captive to rather than controller of productive forces. For Bilheimer, the appropriate Christian response should be a 'Yes' to science and technology, but a 'No' to the idolatry of science and technology.⁷⁷ This was because first and foremost, scientific and technological processes were indiscriminate. This indiscrimination made total war possible. But the

⁷⁶ See Bilheimer's Paper recorded in the Minutes of the Second Meeting of the Study Group on the Moral Aspects of Disarmament, 17 February 1958, BCC Box 14.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

Christian faith was able to counter this with a Gospel of discriminateness. Again the appropriate response was a 'Yes' to the discriminate use of science and technology, but a 'No' to their indiscriminate use.⁷⁸

This analysis raised important issues regarding application. The working out of the appropriate relationship between science, technology, and humanity raised four practical issues. First: nuclear war. Here the Christian was asked to say 'No' to the indiscriminate use of destructive power, but 'Yes' to all efforts towards securing a limitation of this indiscriminate power. This was seen as crucially relevant to the task of negotiation, to the justification of the use of force, and even the selection of objectives and targets in war. Second: power. Christians were obliged to say 'No' to all forms of centralised power, and 'Yes' to all forms of decentralised power. This should be a key factor, for example, in Christian attitudes towards the United Nations and totalitarianism in its various forms.

The third practical issue raised was that of resistance to evil. It was Bilheimer's contention that the Christian should say 'Yes' to the resistance of evil by any discriminate means, but 'No' to the resistance of evil by indiscriminate means. These issues could serve as an important guide in creating a just society. The Christian was obliged to say 'Yes' to all efforts to create a just

⁷⁸ Ibid.

society. This meant the progressive anticipation of human needs, rather than the preservation of the *status quo*.⁷⁹

Bilheimer's paper provoked a lengthy and vigorous, if somewhat indeterminate discussion.⁸⁰ It was not directed nor any indication given as to the desired outcome from such analysis. Several issues that were discussed, however, give some indication of attitudes prevalent in the Group and a sense of the meeting's nature. Issues dealt with included the problem of 'centralised power'. It was pointed out that the control of nuclear weapons, which many Christians supported, implied a form of centralised power. The real issue was whether the control over a particular concentration of power was centralised or not. Where there was a concentration of scientific power, there was usually a compensating centre of political power.⁸¹ In contradistinction to Bilheimer's Actonian thesis that "all power corrupts" it was suggested that power in itself was amoral. Corruption occurred when power was used irresponsibly.

Members of the Group found a certain ambiguity in science.⁸² It was felt that indiscriminateness was a

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ This was included in the meeting's minutes. It is a shame that the ensuing discussion was not attributed to individual Group members. It is therefore impossible to locate the views with particular individuals, but the discussion is still revealing as to the consensus of opinion. See 'Discussion of Bilheimer's Paper' within the minutes of second meeting of the Study Group on the Moral Aspects of Disarmament, 17 February 1958, BCC Box 14.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

personal attribute, inapplicable to science as Bilheimer indicated. The ambiguity lay in the use of science by a human agent. This meant political factors were no less important than scientific factors. Whilst the autodynamism of science was not disputed it was pointed out political factors determined the attitude of those who decided on the uses of science and technology.⁸³

It was Bilheimer's view on the appropriate Christian contribution to the nuclear debate that provoked most discussion. The question arose as to the appropriate Christian contribution to the situation. There were some areas where a specifically Christian contribution was not required.⁸⁴ Whilst Bilheimer's thesis took account of the unity of God the relevance of the whole doctrine of humanity's redemption was not clear.

The Group also felt that much Christian moral thinking was indistinguishable from liberal morality. While it was accepted that not all non-Christians were well-intentioned humanists, the absence of a strong Christian contribution to the debate was noticeable.⁸⁵

In spite of these criticisms the Group decided to use the more relevant issues raised by Bilheimer to advance their own study. The more immediate issue to be incorporated concerned the question of responsibility in terms of

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Minutes of the Second Meeting of the Study Group on the Moral Aspects of Disarmament, 17 February 1958, BCC Box 14.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

scientific, technological, and political processes. It was accepted that "the H-bomb, although very unlikely to be used, induces a paralysis of thought."⁸⁶ The key question raised by this meeting was how Christians could live in a divided world, under the shadow of the H-bomb, whilst reducing international tension. This was because "the fixation on the H-bomb exists, and will have to be reckoned with."⁸⁷

Mackie's Appeal to his Staff Team

By the end of February 1958 Robert Mackie was feeling increasingly dissatisfied with his commission. Despite Bilheimer's contribution the resulting discussion had left him feeling unsure of the direction in which the Group should be led whilst politically and theologically incompetent to guide it. Up to this point the committee's activities had evolved in a vague and uncertain way neither acting with a sense of unity, or being driven in a purposeful direction. All that seemed to have been agreed upon was the questionable decision to escape from the so-called Hiroshima-Belsen dichotomy whilst pursuing Buzzard's thesis. This state of affairs was clearly a product of the imprecise terms of the BCC resolution that had commissioned the Group's task. Mackie felt it was no longer possible to avoid questioning the usefulness of the Group and called for

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

immediate efforts to achieve a clarification of aims. To this end he wrote anxiously⁸⁸ to the Group's staff team (Slack, Keighley, Booth, Goodall, Waddams) requesting frank comments in order to determine how forth-coming meetings be conducted, and what the Group should be aiming to achieve. Mackie found the committee's work hard-going⁸⁹ and found the Group's lack of solidarity⁹⁰ a particularly obvious problem. This lack of Group cohesion presented itself in two ways: first, members did not know each others minds, and yet were required to tackle a sensitive subject; and second, resulting analysis was neither directed nor sufficiently deep. Despite this, three lines of possible inquiry nevertheless presented themselves for more serious discussion.

First, the armament question based on Buzzard's analysis. Buzzard had communicated to Mackie his concern that the profitability of this theme had been somewhat diminished in the committee's eyes by the Soviet's February 2 1958 offer to suspend nuclear tests, if the USA and Britain did

⁸⁸ Copy of Mackie's letter to 'staff team', 21 February 1958, BCC Box 14.

⁸⁹ Mackie wrote: "In particular I find the period of two and a half hours at intervals of several weeks a very difficult one to handle. I have been used to groups which met for a longer time at less frequent intervals. It is part of the difficulty of changing from a world tempo to a national one." (before becoming the International Department Chair, Mackie had been Director of Inter-Church Aid based in Geneva). See Mackie's letter to 'staff team', 21 February 1958, BCC Box 14.

⁹⁰ This lack of solidarity would disappear as a problem after MacIntyre and Bell resigned from the Group in April and May 1958. This fact also questions *The Christian World's* assertion (30 April 1959) that Goodall was the only orthodox pacifist in the Group. If Goodall was a pacifist little in the eventual 1959 *Christians and Atomic War* report or Group discussions suggests his influence.

likewise.⁹¹ Buzzard felt that this had led people into being fooled that there was now less danger of a nuclear exchange. It was his belief that because of this, insufficient attention was being given to the "trigger-happy" mentality of some. Buzzard suggested to Mackie that any pronouncement by the BCC should be on ethical and moral grounds, but nevertheless, should demand moral considerations be taken into account both generally and on individual matters.⁹² The Churches should question whether political, military and economic considerations outweighed moral considerations. With this in mind Buzzard suggested the Group might pronounce upon two tenable attitudes towards war. The Christian pacifist attitude, defined as acceptable personally but not practical for governments. (No differentiation was made between absolute and nuclear pacifism.) And the Christian non-pacifist alternative: *just war* where war is acceptable only where the cause is 'just' and the aim limited to the upholding of justice, and where means are proportionate. Buzzard thought that the H-bomb needed much more analysis in this context because it brought to bear new moral factors, different in kind and discrimination.

⁹¹ Buzzard's fears had been verbally communicated to Mackie who subsequently passed them on to his 'staff team' in the letter dated 21 February 1958. An undated memo drafted by Buzzard, outlining his views on the possible courses of Group action, can however be seen as a precursor to Mackie's appeal. The memo entitled "Possible Action by BCC" is found in BCC Box 14. Groom 1974, pp.359-60 details attitudes to the Soviet offer to suspend tests.

⁹² See Buzzard's undated memo, "Possible Action by BCC", Box 14.

For Mackie Buzzard's ideas of limitation needed further consideration and would benefit by being linked to Bilheimer's ideas of discrimination:

My mind is yet quite open as to whether the limited warfare theory holds water or not. I suspect the enthusiasm of those who advocate it, but I also suspect the rather quick way in which some people turn it down. There is a real issue here. My trouble is whether it is the actual issue on which we should be concentrating at this moment. My guess is that by the April Council meeting, Christian opinion will be concerned with politics rather than with armaments.⁹³

The second area worthy of continued discussion for Mackie was East and West relations. Mackie's hunch was that the Group should prepare itself with relevant statements as to the course which they believed the Government should pursue at any summit meeting. Whilst he didn't pretend that any definitive statement could be prepared, he did think that by working ahead the Group could develop some leads which could be introduced in a speech at the Council's spring Assembly meeting (i.e. in April). Mackie's main fear was that if, as he thought best, military strategy was dealt with in the next meeting only, Buzzard, Howard, and Lewis would quickly lose interest.⁹⁴ Mackie was determined not to lose this 'defence interest.'

For Mackie the third area of profitable inquiry would be on deeper philosophical issues. It was his personal feeling that the Group had too readily escaped from estimating the

⁹³ Mackie's letter to 'staff team', 21 February 1958, BCC Box 14.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

"demonic character" of scientific knowledge.⁹⁵ Mackie was, however, also convinced that it was pretty useless to indulge in "clever conversation" without some profound discussion of Biblical realities beforehand.⁹⁶ He felt that as soon as the Group began to discuss the real nature of power in any situation they immediately found themselves thrown back upon their Christian faith.⁹⁷ Here Mackie hoped the theological expertise of the Rev. Dr. Norman Goodall and the Rev. Dr. Daniel Jenkins could bring forth important points to bear:

There is a sense in which more reflective Christians can help the rest of us greatly. On the other hand, we verge for a time on the suggestion that Christian theology is a body of knowledge and principles, which can be referred to without the individual on every occasion being personally engaged. I think personally that some dis-service has been done by people who have suggested that the nuclear age brings new moral problems. That seems to me nonsense. The moral problems are those we find in the Bible, but they have been given a new and difficult setting. There is sometimes a suggestion that those of us who are not pacifists, can be wafted into a pacifist position by nuclear energy without having to make the essential personal decisions required. This curious hesitation of the Christian Church in face of new factors, seems to me to weaken its influence greatly. Is there any hope of our picking out a few fundamental considerations, which seem unusually apposite at this particular moment of history, but are not new theological solutions of a new problem?⁹⁸

Mackie's plea for guidance met with various suggestions from his staff team.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Mackie to 'staff team' 21 February 1958, BCC Box 14.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

Deciding Future Policy

Canon Waddams believed that the problems raised by the Group were essentially theological ones concerning the nature of guidance and of revelation.⁹⁹ Although he asserted that Christians were well prepared to tackle political problems if they choose to, because their faith made them realistic, this did not mean that one Christian method could or should be utilised. For Waddams there was only one important question for British Christians to pursue: deciding on the appropriate but general attitude of Britain to international affairs. It was guidance on this matter alone that was most likely to prevent war and ensure peace. The legitimacy of pacifist or non-pacifist argument was not the issue. Whether a specifically Christian judgement could be brought to bear on this was just too difficult a question to answer. This clear exposition of the 'middle axioms' approach to Christian social ethics¹⁰⁰ meant Waddams was of the opinion that no ecclesiastical organisation should provide any specific answers. The Canon felt the Group incapable of reaching any decisive answer to the Buzzard hypothesis.¹⁰¹ Awareness of this made it clear to Waddam's that the Group's main task should consequently be to encourage Christian citizens to discuss the issues and

⁹⁹ Herbert Waddams responded to Mackie's plea for guidance in his reply dated 24 February 1958, BCC Box 14.

¹⁰⁰ c.f. Chapter Three of this thesis on the 1937 Oxford Life and Work Conference ('Church, Community and State').

¹⁰¹ Waddams to Mackie, 24 February 1958, BCC Box 14.

contribute in only a general sense to the debate. In short, Waddams thought the question of authority, who speaks for who, was uppermost here:

...it would be quite wrong for the Churches as such, whether individually or through the BCC or its International Department, to try to answer the question definitely because by doing so they would imply a claim to special guidance and knowledge which they have not in fact got. I find myself driven to the inexorable conclusion that the most which such a group as ourselves could or ought to do is to set out clearly and succinctly the problems about which the discussion ought to take place, and to recommend Christians to make their own contributions to this discussion in whatever way is available to them.¹⁰²

This call for a conscious withdrawal from the debate raises the question why the experienced Canon joined the Group in the first place. As General Secretary of the Church of England's Council on Foreign Relations Waddams was only too aware of the nature of the nuclear dilemma. Waddams pessimism stands in contrast with the attitude of the Group's most reluctant staff team recruit Norman Goodall, who despite his reservations, had clear alternatives for Mackie.¹⁰³

For Goodall it was essential first and foremost to determine how the Group saw its task in the wider setting. Clarifying this would involve understanding the Government position, Christian thinking, and what the BCC may wish to have said.¹⁰⁴ Knowledge of these issues would make it easier

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ See Goodall's reply to Mackie's 'staff letter', 26 February 1958, BCC Box 14.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

to reach agreement over the future direction of the Group. Once attitudes were clarified there were several practical steps, not necessarily mutually exclusive, that could be taken.

First, Goodall suggested that the Group could press the BCC to pass a resolution urging the Government to take a particular view. This was the situation, as Goodall understood it, most likely at present. Second, he thought the Group could bring forward statements (about 1,000 words long) that might help enlighten Christian public opinion as to what the Council thought individual Churches should be doing in the present climate. Third, the Group could accept 'Buzzard's approach.' This involved the presentation of a thesis which the experts in the Group could criticise. Goodall felt that such a presentation should be by someone who knew the BCC and thereby had a realistic understanding of the possible lines the Council might take. This would have the benefit of focusing discussion and preventing someone "lead off" with their own agenda.¹⁰⁵ Goodall's fourth and final recommendation was for the Group to discuss why some defence experts thought the case for the H-bomb, the 'great deterrent', were still valid. This was essentially the Conservative Government's view outlined in the 1958 White Paper.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ *Report on Defence: Britain's Contribution to Peace and Security*, Cmd. 363, 1958. For commentary see chapters 13-20 in Groom 1974, and Navias 1991.

This final suggestion had become particularly relevant and immediate. George Brown, the Opposition spokesperson on defence, had just delivered¹⁰⁷ a devastating indictment of Government policy in the Commons. Brown had complained that the Conservatives had no military means for dealing with anything between a border incident and all-out thermo-nuclear war. The charge was that the British government was relying too much on the H-bomb. Brown's response was to call for the immediate development of tactical nuclear weapons to remedy the situation.¹⁰⁸ What Goodall thought was needed here was a clear response from the Group to this call. Such criticism would involve various political and moral, as well as theological arguments.¹⁰⁹

The Consequences of Mackie's Letter

As a consequence of Mackie's appeal four decisions were arrived at. First, Mackie rejected Canon Waddams' call to rely on 'middle axioms' and not produce a definitive nuclear policy. Second, Anthony Buzzard was asked to write a paper elaborating what was involved in maintaining the balance of power, the possible consequences of a British unilateral

¹⁰⁷ Brown actually made his attack in the Commons on the same day Goodall wrote to Mackie. Brown complained: "The White Paper provides for nothing but conventional troops, conventional weapons and a thermo-nuclear weapon.... If we do not provide for tactical atomic weapons and for large-scale forces... then, in fact, we have nothing with which to meet the in-between areas at all." *Hansard: House of Commons*, Vol. 583, Col.410, 26 February 1958, George Brown.

¹⁰⁸ A sentiment, for example, *The Manchester Guardian* thought was a "grave mistake" for the Labour Party to encourage. See *Leader* dated 27 February 1958.

¹⁰⁹ Goodall's reply to Mackie's 'staff letter', 26 February 1958, BCC Box 14.

suspension or cessation of tests, and to discuss the nature of a nuclear *just war*. Here Mackie's, Goodall's, and Keighley's suggestions would be accounted for. Finally, Alan Booth was asked to develop a paper outlining the main issues at stake in the East-West conflict.¹¹⁰

Admiral Buzzard's task was accomplished and presented as a short paper, "Notes on Western Defence and Disarmament Policy", at the third meeting of the Study Group on the 5th March.¹¹¹ He suggested that there were three areas of discussion, within approaches to Western defence policy, relevant to the concern of the Churches. These were the means with which the West would wage war, the ways in which war could be avoided, and the potential for unilateral action.

For Buzzard the West talked of modern war far too easily. This meant it was important that war should only be considered as a last resort -- as an action to uphold justice. If war was engaged, the means utilised should always be proportionate to the ends sought. It was necessary, therefore, to remember that former conceptions of victory were now no longer tenable -- the invention of nuclear weapons meant there must be a readiness to return to negotiation at all times. The inescapable conclusion of

¹¹⁰ Booth's paper *East/West -- A Theological Comment* was written in December 1957 and can be found attached to a letter to Keighley dated 20 December 1957, BCC Box 14.

¹¹¹ Minutes of the Third Meeting of the Study Group on the Moral Aspects of Disarmament, 5 March 1958, BCC Box 14.

this was the need to develop in what ways the West could avoid the possibility of genocide in dealing with a limited issue. Such a conclusion presented certain possibilities for unilateral Western action.

First, it was necessary for the West to accept the stalemate on the level of total global war and relax the race for H-bombs. This meant accepting the adequacy of the present deterrent. Second, the outstanding question was to decide whether H-bomb tests were essential for the development of tactical nuclear weapons. Buzzard thought not. The West, Britain specifically, with the support of the Churches should call for the unilateral suspension of hydrogen bomb testing. Third, the West should state that it would never be first to use the 'great deterrent'. This involved the Churches calling for the adoption of a 'No First Use' policy of strategic weapons. Finally, Buzzard called for additional unilateral action from the West in order to limit nuclear proliferation.

Booth's East-West Theology

The paper on East-West relations written by Booth began with the assertion that the conflict between East and West was irreconcilable.¹¹² This was because both liberal democracy and Communism demanded total victory. Whilst the

¹¹² Many of Booth's ideas expressed here prefigured his later publication *Christians and Power Politics* (Booth 1961) that was so favourably received by journals of international politics. For detail of this reception see Epp's 1990 PhD pp.287-8.

desired victory was not necessarily envisaged in military terms, it was necessarily a spiritual and ideological war. Nonetheless:

It is (also) true to say that the East/West conflict, in God's sight, is a conflict of greys, not of black and white -- and it is properly asserted that in God's providence each side needs to some degree the other's criticism....The issue we (i.e. Christians) seek is one in which both sides, no doubt in varying degrees, allow themselves to be changed creatively by their impact on one another.¹¹³

Even though the conflict was without an absolute (i.e. theological) significance this did not mean that it was without significance. The task of Christians was to expose the pride and self-righteousness which led states to describe their enemies in wholly negative terms. The West was morally predisposed to recognise the partnership of the East in working out the destiny of humanity. What was needed was not only time for repentance, but a resolute refusal to surrender those 'good gifts'¹¹⁴ that have been entrusted to Western societies. Liberal democracy must refine, under communist criticism, an understanding of what the West was charged to preserve. A consequence of this would be the development, in Western public psyche, of a steadfast willingness to resist invasion and destruction. Total surrender to the West's enemies, total capitulation to the Communist way of thinking, could never be envisaged. The constant witness of the Church was needed to guard

¹¹³ *East/West -- A Theological Comment*, BCC Box 14.

¹¹⁴ Not specified.

against the temptation to absolutise the conflict. The Church was vital in reminding people that God was judge of all states and content with none.¹¹⁵ The significance of this last point was that first, militarily speaking, Booth saw a Christian obligation to ensure the communist world was not destroyed: "We are responsible for our enemy's welfare."¹¹⁶ Second, as far as Booth understood Providence, the West had a responsibility to preserve those 'good gifts' God had given it. This meant not letting the West be destroyed wantonly by states that did not share the same values. In essence the West and the Christian Churches should 'aim to parley':

But the parley is not simply about a *modus vivendi* -- it must by one means or another be directed towards humanity's common problems:-- the problems of emerging industrial societies; the sharing of riches of skill, knowledge and wealth with under developed countries; and the means of enabling man to live as man in highly organised societies.¹¹⁷

Booth expanded these most Augustinian-like themes in a private letter to a 'peace activist'.¹¹⁸ Ray Stagles (a nuclear pacifist) had called on the Group to have the courage to locate their attitude to the H-bomb on two levels. First, Stagles called on the Group to support calls for the abolition of the H-bomb because it was a legitimate 'absolute principle'; and second, to see its abolition as

¹¹⁵ East/West -- A Theological Comment, BCC Box 14.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Stagles's letter to Booth (n.d.), and Booth's reply dated 31 January 1958 in BCC Box 14.

being a practical 'first step' towards global disarmament. Booth rejected both calls.

In the first instance Booth did not subscribe to the view that the acceptance of the H-bomb as a deterrent implied envisaging occasions when it should be used. Whilst Booth accepted there was no conceivable situation in which the use of the H-bomb could be justified, he nevertheless felt that seeing the argument in terms of pure 'human cost' was spurious:

The continuance of human history is not a prime priority, is it? Some of the noblest acts of men have meant the acceptance of death and destruction rather than the betrayal of a principle. So we must not make mere continuance of life on this planet a sole consideration. Is resistance to communism worse than surrender? Is vast destruction worse than the domination of minds and spirits by a political machine and view capable of shutting out man's true humanity?¹¹⁹

For Booth it was not a simple choice. He was not assessing what he thought public opinion could be persuaded to accept, but thinking of what the Study Group on the Moral Aspects of Disarmament, as both BCC and Christian representatives should do. The logic of this argument moved people off 'principles' and back to calculations and guesses of consequences. He argued that a Church which is led to choose the second risk (i.e. surrendering to communism) must face the consequences -- in effect a deliberate policy of abandoning participation in military defence against

¹¹⁹ p.1 of letter from Booth to Ray Stagles, 31 January 1958, BCC Box 14.

communism.¹²⁰ For him this was not an acceptable option. Booth was similarly not persuaded by King-Hall's passive resistance ideas.¹²¹ All such argument was representative of what he called "the Jesus fetish" -- a simplistic idealism that suggested differences in approach all boiled down to different views of how the Church should best bear witness before the State.

In the second instance, on the practical level, Stagles had suggested that notions of 'absolute principle' were meaningless to the soldier or politician who needed to know 'next steps'. Why not call for the unilateral abandoning of all nuclear testing? For Booth "Enough is plenty, you cannot kill a nation deader than dead", stopping tests and refusing to participate in an endless arms-race was a policy worth pursuing eagerly. Yet he sympathised with technical objections -- the need for better bombs, better systems of delivery: "The logic is sound, but the race is endless. That is why I think there is a chance to call a halt."¹²²

This letter gives us a good understanding of Booth's view on the purpose of the Churches, and the Moral Group, in this debate. For Booth the Church's task was clear. He complains bitterly of ecclesiastical authorities always

¹²⁰ As Booth himself averred "You cannot have it both ways". Argument of p.2 of Booth's letter to Stagles, 31 January 1958, BCC Box 14.

¹²¹ See above for detail on King-Hall and 'passive resistance'. For Booth the Soviets were not likely to come to conquer in such a situation but would simply turn off the Middle East fuel taps and wait for the ensuing economic confusion to break up society.

¹²² p.2 of Booth to Stagles, 31 January 1958, BCC Box 14.

"scolding" the country.¹²³ What Booth wanted to determine was did the Christian Church really mean business? He had two criticisms: the first was the "cheapness" of the Church's action. For him resolutions and speeches 'cost' nothing. When the German Church took a stand against Hitler, it was costly -- and so it was heard. In short: "If it [the Church] is really going to proclaim God's word of judgement and start men on a new way, what money, time and imagination does it offer?"¹²⁴ Differences in approach thus boiled down to differences in emphasis. To Booth unilateralism was costly, too costly. Unilateralist sentiments had simply emerged from a minimum of study. The problem with contemporary Christian research on the nuclear dilemma was that the time devoted to it was infinitesimal compared to the time given by journalists, the Armed Services, and politicians. Because politicians were only too aware of how little time the Churches were giving to the matters they pronounced upon, the Moral Group's task was to seek to restore professional credibility. Busy schedules were not an excuse for insufficient analysis. The point for Booth was that "...if you have not the time, you must keep quiet, and if you feel bound to speak you must talk sense. It is tempting to try to side-step this costly business by being "prophetic", but it is phoney prophecy."¹²⁵ Booth's

¹²³ Ibid., p.3.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ p.4 of Booth to Stagles, 31 January 1958, BCC Box 14.

avowed aim (and by consequence the Group's) was to be both considered and constructive and this meant first freeing the Churches from the dilemma posed by Hiroshima and Belsen.¹²⁶ Booth thought it worth resisting Communism because he saw no alternative, but he wanted to find 'safeguards' to prevent a nuclear exchange as quickly as possible. In this sense he was willing to bet hydrogen bombs would not be used, except as a result of miscalculations. The appropriate attitude for the West to take was: "Keep it (the H-bomb) and let it cancel itself out -- but try to stop any further development of it." The West could afford limited unilateral action here, even more, the UK could.

Booth thought the West needed to ensure the global military stalemate, the balance of power, but in a way that reduced reliance on nuclear weapons. For him this meant increasing defence budgets and re-introducing conscription:¹²⁷ "...somehow the West has to escape from preoccupation with its own standard of living and be prepared to resume the hard road of helping the rest of mankind much more effectively. The question of balancing military and aid demands on the budget is vastly difficult."¹²⁸ This last argument would figure strongly in subsequent Group discussions.

¹²⁶ i.e. Booth wanted the debate moved beyond discussing in what circumstances nuclear war should be endured and at what point Christians should think it preferable to submit rather than to provoke atomic war.

¹²⁷ This was important because the Government saw nuclear weapons as the essential means with which to pay for their pledge to end conscription.

¹²⁸ p.4 of Booth to Stagles, 31 January 1958, BCC Box 14.

Booth's sincerity comes through in these arguments. He believed passionately that the Church needed to respond ecumenically to the issues in a serious, professional, and considered way: "The odd speech or resolution is not enough -- it needs something more resolute, corporate, and substantialsomehow we have got to get round the elevation of amateurish opinion to false importance by the device of labelling it 'Christian.'" ¹²⁹ For him the Buzzard thesis and a nuclear just war, was only a natural way to forward such an approach.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that as a direct corollary of Admiral Buzzard's paper delivered to Council in October 1957, a Study Group on the Moral Aspects of Disarmament was formed. Whilst Robert Mackie, the Group's Chair, desired an even-handed or "ideologically balanced" approach the Study Group was dominated by representatives of the realist "if you want peace, prepare for war" perspective. The Priestleys and the King-Halls were not accounted for. The nature of the eventual BCC contribution should come as little surprise once the powerfully articulated ideological preferences of those selected to serve in the Group are considered. ¹³⁰ The fact that the Study Group was generally unsympathetic to "if

¹²⁹ Ibid. pp.4-5

¹³⁰ c.f. Anthony Dyson's "Styles of Documentary Engagement" in Bauckham and Elford (eds.) 1989, pp.95-114.

you want peace, prepare for peace"¹³¹ idealism, led to the notion that a realist approach was inevitable. This is notwithstanding the sense that Mackie and Group Secretary Keighley (who became converted to Buzzard's position) were not particularly driven to support Buzzard at first. It was their 'neutrality', and not just Buzzard's coherence, that resulted in the adoption of a gradualist, multilateralist, and just war approach to the nuclear debate. Bringing Bishop Bell and Alasdair MacIntyre into the Group to represent 'peace activism' created no serious challenge to the Buzzardist hegemony.

The inclusion of Bell and MacIntyre into the Study Group produced an initial lack of agreement on whether a specifically Christian contribution could be made to the problem of defence and disarmament. The common denominator in the Study Group's thinking was an agreement in favour of the broad desirability of 'peace' -- anything that reduced Cold War tension and made war less likely. Any agreement beyond this proved difficult. Here Alan Booth appeared as a vitally important contributor to the Group's thinking, second in importance only to Buzzard. It was Booth who became largely responsible for the clarification of policy and process in the Group.

¹³¹ The phrase is Professor Rotblat's. Cited in *The Coventry Evening Telegraph* November 11 1997.

Booth was particularly 'Augustinian' in his perspective. He believed passionately that the Church needed to respond in an ecumenical fashion to the issues in a serious, considered way: the Group's task was to restore professional credibility to the Church. Booth was responsible for the idea that there had hitherto been a frequent failure on the part of Christians to sit down humbly before the facts and to consider them realistically. His contribution led the Study Group to concentrate on the idea that nuclear weapons could be controlled once a realist-type understanding of international affairs was conceded to. The extent to which this approach would be affected by the birth of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament is now discussed in Chapter Eight.

CHAPTER EIGHT:

A NUCLEAR JUST WAR THEORY 1958-59

Introduction

1957 had been a significant year for the British peace debate. Christopher Driver saw¹ four events in that year that precipitated the emergence of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND). The events were: first, the Labour Party's Conference where Nye Bevan denounced nuclear unilateralism as tantamount to "sending a Foreign Secretary naked into the conference chamber." Secondly, J. B. Priestley's infamous riposte to Bevan in the *New Statesman*² which argued that Britain's massive retaliation policy negated democratic politics and placed crucial decisions beyond ordinary citizens. He argued that nuclear unilateralism was the only way for Britain to 'regain' her moral political leadership in the world. Thirdly, George Kennan's Reith Lectures because, for many people, they were the first indication that there was a considered alternative to massive retaliation. The fourth event had been the launching of *Sputnik I* which proved to the West that the Soviets now had the system technology to launch inter-continental ballistic missiles. To these events of note

¹ Driver 1964, p.37-38.

² *New Statesman* November 2 1957.

may be added Commander King-Hall's appeal for a Royal Commission to study the possibilities of unarmed resistance as a national policy. This was greeted with much sympathy by the nuclear pacifist left and, as Driver has also suggested,³ meant that probably for the first time in Britain's history not everyone was prepared to dismiss the notion of 'passive resistance' as totally absurd. Against this background the British Council of Churches formed a Study Group to consider the moral aspects of defence.

This chapter analyses the impact of CND on the peace debate within the British Churches by locating its attitude to the State, and discussing its understanding of democratic political responsibility. It argues that, as a consequence of the CND, the debate in the Churches moved beyond differences between pacifist and *just war* into a conflict essentially between gradualist multilateralism (*just war*), and non-contingent unilateralism (nuclear pacifist). It concludes with a detailed study of the final product of the Study Group's labour, the report *Christians and Atomic War*.

Part I: CND's Democratic Protest

On 17 February 1958 5,000 people crowded into the Central Hall, Westminster and its four overflow halls to listen to speakers including Canon Collins, J. B. Priestley, Sir Stephen King-Hall, Bertrand Russell and A. J. P. Taylor denounce

³ Driver 1964, p.36.

Government defence policy.⁴ A detailed history⁵ is not necessary here, but understanding the Campaign's impact on Church thinking is vital.

CND originated as a moralistic, anti-political crusade.⁶ It was anti-statist in the sense that the movement expressed the achievement of its goals as more important than any other policy objective that may be pursued by conventional political leadership. Its distinctive symbol, a circle enclosing the semaphore signals for N(uclear) and D(isarmament), became an important legacy for protest movement throughout the world.⁷ The Campaign's main tactic was the mass demonstration.⁸ Here a diverse assortment of individuals: Christians, Marxists, anarchists, pacifists, Labour leftists, New leftists, and liberals all marched under the CND banner.⁹ All were united by a sense of moral outrage against the Bomb, a conviction that Britain was on the road to physical and spiritual destruction, and the hope (ultimately misplaced) that if their voices were heard, they could redirect Britain's foreign and military policy, strengthen Britain's future, and save the

⁴ Duff 1971, pp.123-5.

⁵ See for example: Driver 1964; Parkin 1968; Taylor and Pritchard 1980; Taylor 1988; Duff 1971; and Collins 1966.

⁶ A hypothesis developed by Frank Myers' 1965 PhD.

⁷ Duff 1971, p.116 and Veldman 1994, p.115. According to Frank Myers (1965 PhD, p.107) the symbol's resemblance to the semaphore signals was coincidental. He writes that the symbol's creator, Gerald Holtom, intention was to depict a drooping cross as a sign of his despair at the failure of the churches to speak out against nuclear weapons.

⁸ The famous marches to the Nuclear Weapons Research Establishment at Aldermaston were, for example, said to represent the "greatest movement in this island since the days of the Chartists". The first March over the 1958 Easter Weekend was a great success with 3000-5,000 people at the opening rally in Trafalgar Square, 500-700 hard-core marchers and 5000-10,000 at the closing rally. Driver 1964, p.59.

⁹ Veldman 1994, p.116.

earth.¹⁰ Their initial aim was the simple demand to "Ban the Bomb".¹¹ The British State was called to do this unilaterally in order to set an example to the world.¹² CND was not an absolute pacifist organisation (although absolutists supported it) but rather the first nuclear pacifist mass movement.¹³

Frank Myers categorised the CND as a mass movement, a "collective enterprise to establish a new order of life".¹⁴ The movement called upon people to make a more careful distinction between notions of human power, human control, and human responsibility in the nuclear age.¹⁵ It was an expression of the feeling that, in an age of mass technological destruction, political power was too concentrated and vast numbers faced death as a result of an

¹⁰ Veldman 1994, p.119. For an analysis of the Campaign's political impact and significance see Taylor 1988. This book is a substantially revised version of his 1983 PhD.

¹¹ I am concerned here with the period prior to Labour's 1959 General Election defeat. After 1959 CND's programme changed beyond unilateralism by calling for the British withdrawal from NATO. At the same time the movement changed its primary tactic to the infiltration of the Labour Party. When this tactic failed CND modified their goals to make them more 'realistic'. Myers 1965 PhD argues that at this point the movement lost its anti-political quality and became a conventional pressure-group.

¹² This call for British national affairs to be conducted in accordance with a categorical moral imperative is very Kantian in the sense that it was seen as the basis of the development of a higher national community based on the rule of law.

¹³ Out of CND's first Executive, Driver suggests Canon Collins and Arthur Goss were the only pacifists, and the committee was cautious about adding pacifists to its number due to their lack of standing in society writ large (Driver 1964, p.44). Driver's assertion of attitudes to pacifism are confirmed by this research.

¹⁴ Myers 1965 PhD, p.iv.

¹⁵ See Bauckham in Bauckham and Elford (eds.) 1989, p.43 for an excellent consideration of these themes. Bauckham's essay "Facing the Future: The Challenge to Secular and Theological Presuppositions" (pp.29-46) develops a 'theology of hope' that helps understand the theistic resources drawn upon by Christians involved in CND. He argues first, that the nuclear threat was responsible for the loss of hope in contemporary society, and secondly, that the Christian tradition offered a source of hope, once the challenge to theological presuppositions was appreciated and met.

unresponsive and intransigent political decision-making process.¹⁶ The movement accepted that a select number of human beings had the power to end all human history but, although most citizens did not have direct control of this power, it should not diminish the citizen's responsibility to help create a safer world. Their distinct linking of 'peace' to 'democracy' challenged the very notion that the State could legitimately sacrifice the life of society in defence of its apparatuses. Their approach not only questioned the level of confidence that should be placed in liberal democratic political processes, but argued that the important issue to be faced was not one of national security but one of popular sovereignty and the relationship between political institutions and the people's needs. Ultimately, the CND's idealist vision of 'new democracy' encompassed a critical appraisal of dominant political institutions both Western and Soviet.¹⁷

From this perspective the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament was a protest for greater democracy. It did not so much want to persuade the political establishment of the desirability of its demands but rather persuade civil society of the corruption of its political leadership. By demanding an increased role for democratic social movements in the

¹⁶ See Myers' 1965 PhD for a full descriptive treatment of the unilateralist campaign and its significance as a large-scale public response to changes in international politics brought about by nuclear armaments.

¹⁷ An excellent and complementary discussion of the peace movement's role in "Rethinking Cold War History" is provided by Mary Kaldor in Booth (ed.) 1991, pp.313-31. Elshtain 1985 offers a feminist view on the discourse.

formulation of State policy the organisation saw itself, as Olson convincingly argues¹⁸, building an alternative social dynamic and one that would operate outside the cycle of established Cold War responses both Atlanticist and Stalinist. To CND supporters the roots of the arms race, and by implication the solution to the Cold war, were not to be found in the interaction of mutual threat (as realists would have it) but through the instigation of social change. This was not simply something that was or could be requested of Government. It meant accepting that change could only be brought about through socio-political organisation -- by taking an independent responsibility and actively struggling against the nuclear Establishment. This mobilisation of popular forms of economic and social groupings saw itself as an alternative to a system based on States that competed internationally, whilst suppressing national popular aspirations. The movement was a reaction against the process of bargaining itself, *Realpolitik* definitions of politics as force, and a challenge to Christian ideas of political responsibility. This subversive estimation of the worth of liberal democracy constituted a most important divide between the CND's revolutionary, non-contingent unilateralism and the

¹⁸ Olson's 1962 PhD, p.12. Olson's work is particularly interesting in that his focus on the campaign for unilateral disarmament centres on the theology, implied and explicit, in the documents produced by the movement in the years 1957-1961.

BCC's incremental, gradualist multilateralism.¹⁹ These points are key elements in reaching an understanding of the CND.

CND and the *Just War* Debate

For many concerned Christians the traditional debate between pacifists (those who absolutely oppose war) and pacific-ists (the rest)²⁰ was invalidated with the formation of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. For these people it had become nonsensical to suggest the use of nuclear weapons could be a proportionate, indeed moral, means of defence simply because the result would be national suicide. As Margaret Thrall has put it "The moral justification for non-pacifism...disappeared in the nuclear context."²¹ The formation of the CND was important because it served to institutionalise the sense that the main issue for Christians to consider was no longer between pacifism and *just war* as such, but between gradualist multilateralism or unconditional unilateral disarmament.

It has been shown in previous chapters that the tension between pacifists and *just war* theorists had been the dominant feature in the peace debate within the Churches, and one largely untroubled by the introduction of thermonuclear devices. Differences in approach had, however, been exemplified by a relative willingness to act and organise

¹⁹ See Milbank 1986 for a more general discussion of this divide between Christian multilateralists and Christian unilateralists.

²⁰ c.f. Chapter One. Ceadel 1980, pp.3-8 offers an interesting discussion on the etymological differences between these terms. Hinton 1989, p.xi follows this approach.

²¹ Thrall 1966, p.340.

opposition. While absolutists like Dr. Donald Soper, the Revd. Dr. George Macloed, and Canon Charles Raven were respected for actively encouraging and promoting pacifism in their Churches they had been marginalised in society at large by their opposition to the Second World War. Because many Christians thought the war against Hitler was just, Soper, Macloed and Raven diminished the credibility of the pacifist approach. A Christian nuclear pacifist (non-absolutist but anti-nuclear) stance suggested itself to be a much more productive platform from which to galvanise radical opposition ever since it was first enunciated by the US Calhoun Commission in 1946. It was not until the formation of CND and its acceptance by a mass movement, however, that the nuclear pacifist approach was truly legitimated in the minds of many Christians.

Many of the Christians who participated in CND had, nevertheless been first drawn to the struggle through their continued activism in the pacifist organisations. The official Church position of accepting nuclear weapons had encouraged individual Church leaders to speak out, and small groups to agitate. Some members of groups, such as the Anglican Peace Fellowship and the Fellowship of Reconciliation, were still to figure largely in continued Government opposition despite the formation of CND. This also served to fragment opposition and is one reason why the

Campaign's impact on the Churches was not greater than it was.²²

Canon John Collins, as first Chair of CND,²³ was perhaps the most famous and representative of this new breed of Christian nuclear unilateralists. Although Collins' lack of pacifism would alienate him from some, his approach typifies the CND approach. He was univocal in his feelings towards nuclear weapons:

I say that I am not an absolute pacifist; but where nuclear, biological, or any other indiscriminate or mass-destructive weapons are concerned, I have never doubted, certainly since 1945, that their manufacture, let alone the threat to use them or their actual use, is not only wholly contrary to the Christian conscience, but also something to be actively opposed by every Christian.²⁴

This modified pacifism captured the spirit of the times. It argued that modern weapons could no longer be compatible with the requirements of *just war*. Collins saw his ministry as one which brought together pacifists and nuclear pacifists in a mutual rejection of *just war*. To him the hitherto ineffectiveness of pacifist social movements could be seen in terms of three persistent problems: the widespread notion that pacifists had enfeebled resistance to Hitler; the divisions between peace organisations; and prior to 1958 and CND, the failure to appreciate that Hiroshima demanded a radical change

²² A good example of this is shown when both the Peace Pledge Union and the Fellowship of Reconciliation officially withheld their support from the incipient CND on the grounds that if the Campaign were successful it might encourage outbreaks of conventional warfare. See Collins 1966, p.268.

²³ Canon at St. Paul's from 1949 until his death in 1983, Chair of CND 1958-1964. See Chapter Three for detail and significance of Collins' activism with 'Christian Action.'

²⁴ Collins 1966, p.277.

of approach to the whole question of peace-making. The three problems facing Christian anti-nuclear campaigners were henceforth: first, to communicate that the just war doctrine was irrelevant in the nuclear age; second, that new and radical (i.e. unilateralist) approaches to disarmament were necessary; and third, to mobilise sympathetic comrades in one, united mass movement. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament brought a solution to these problems.

The Impact of the Movement on the BCC

CND speakers achieved gratifying effects by ridiculing the behaviour of the Churches, who as represented by the BCC Study Group in particular, were arguing the moral problems raised by multilateralism and unilateralism alike. This ridicule was only to be expected since not all Campaigners were Christians, nor all Christians Campaigners.²⁵ The formation of CND demanded a clear moral choice to be made by all, not just Christians. As Driver argues:

For CND, it was a question of choosing which type of moral revulsion one preferred: against the genocide implications of all-out nuclear war, against the sacrifice of future generations' health in return for the present expediency of nuclear testing, or more generally against the assumption, implicit in the White Paper and the reasoning of some of the new generation of defence experts, that moral considerations of any kind were irrelevant to the formation of a nation's 'policy for survival'.²⁶

²⁵ This fact was represented in the CND Executive with Arthur Goss, Canon Collins and Sir Richard Acland being the only members known to be active Christians.

²⁶ Driver 1964, p.77.

For Christians the choice was not necessarily seen in these terms. To the Churches the formation of CND gave four clear choices for concerned Christians: first, they could support the Government view as articulated through their massive retaliation strategy; second, Buzzard's brand of just war gradualism could be supported. This meant, in effect, putting defence first and calling for multilateral approaches to disarmament as a consequential second. Third, Christians could support CND unilateralism. Finally, they could commit themselves to the absolute pacifist cause. For most Christians the serious choice, following the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, became one between nuclear pacifism or a nuclear *just war*.

Whilst individual Christians and Church leaders who supported massive retaliation were primarily motivated by abject and unconditional hostility to Communism, ~~A~~ more considered and moderate articulation of this approach was represented by the BCC's ever-increasing interest in Buzzard's limited war thesis. Many of the more Manichean Christians, in this way, also found themselves able to support Buzzard without compromising their hostility to Communism.

CND, alternatively, asserted the impropriety of nuclear bluff as well as the need for anti-nuclear democratic organisation. Bluff and deterrence were seen as psychological weapons whose effectiveness depended on their credibility -- that is, on the effect they produced in the mind of an

enemy.²⁷ This 'bluff and deterrence' were a necessary aspect of Buzzard's approach. It is the main reason why Canon Collins was critical of the realism of Church leaders such as Archbishop Fisher who accepted deterrence and helped reinforce the opinion that it was fear that made the world go round. For the same reasons Campaigners saw deterrence theory not only morally unacceptable but essentially opposed to their faith in the validity of unilateral political action. This assertion, nevertheless, raised practical as well as moral questions which exposed the Campaign to counter attacks.

The principal form these counter-attacks took were based on Buzzard's thesis. Campaigners found it difficult to rebut the limited war approach on the strategists ground because it demanded a more vigorous and intellectual cohesion than the movement possessed. But this was not really the point. The principal objection was the moral, theological and political incompatibility of nuclear pacifism with multilateralism or any form of gradualism. You were either for or against the Bomb. If you were unconditionally against its use, you renounced it and embraced unilateralism as a consequence. For Campaigners it was illogical to suggest you could be a nuclear (or H-bomb) pacifist and then call for a gradualist approach to ensure its renunciation as the Buzzardists argued. For them nuclear pacifism (as a programme for action) could only be compatible with unilateralism. To threaten to destroy, to keep the deterrent albeit in limited form, still allowed the

²⁷ Driver 1964, p.77.

possibility of actually using the weapons. The only 'safe' and logical course of political action was a call for renunciation (i.e. unilateralism) even if it proved impossible in practical terms. You had to be a Campaigner, or have faith in *just war* doctrine. This was not a distinction the BCC Study Group felt able to accept.

CND institutionalised the main division in the Churches as one between nuclear pacifism and *just war*. CND did not, therefore, revolutionise Church thinking but rather intensified, polarised and codified existing divisions. Whilst the formation of the Campaign did not in any way create a new situation for the British Churches it did create a coherent challenge to the Buzzardists. The arrival of CND enforced the contention that in the nuclear age, the significant division in the Churches was no longer between pacifism and *just war*, but rather between gradualist (*just war*) or unilateralist (nuclear pacifist) approaches to disarmament. This was the conclusion Bell and MacIntyre reached.

Bell and MacIntyre Resign

In April 1958, shortly before the Study Group on the Moral aspects of Disarmament's fourth meeting, Alasdair MacIntyre tendered his resignation.²⁸ In May Bishop Bell resigned.²⁹ Both determined to give their time and attention to CND. This

²⁸ MacIntyre to Keighley, 19 April 1958, BCC Box 14.

²⁹ Citing ill-health (Bell died later in the year) Bell resigned in a letter to Keighley, 28 May 1958, BCC Box 14.

was not surprising. The Group's progress had reinforced MacIntyre's and Bell's belief that their own standpoints were both socially, morally and theologically too far away from that of the committee. It was precisely this fear that had made MacIntyre hesitate in agreeing to join the Group. The birth of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament had changed things both intellectually and practically for the Group. CND was now a clear focus and home for those unconditionally opposed to nuclear weapons. MacIntyre wanted to give all his time to the incipient movement:

My own feeling is that the issue as to whether to support or not to support the campaign is as simple as the moral issue over the abolition of slavery and that all other discussion on this topic has become trivial and irrelevant.³⁰

For MacIntyre it was a waste of money and time to remain in the committee. His feeling was that the Group's work was largely irrelevant to the important issues.³¹ For Bell, MacIntyre, and CND, their argument turned on a different interpretation of 'facts' and conceptions of 'power' within international relations. Margaret Thrall an Anglican pacifist has nicely summarised the argument:

The actual facts of the present situation, i.e. the component elements of the balance of terror, the pacifist [both nuclear and absolutist] would claim to take very seriously indeed, and would maintain that only a quite radical change in our whole way of thinking is adequate to deal with them. What the Christian pacifist refuses to accept is that such a change of outlook is totally

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ In response to the Group's plea for him to reconsider his resignation MacIntyre writes "...I am afraid that I still feel the work of the committee is largely irrelevant to the important issues and that it would be unfair to you as well as a waste of time for me to reconsider my resignation." MacIntyre to Keighley 16 May 1958.

impossible, that we are so deeply enslaved by our present political circumstances that we cannot break free of them to shape our future history in accordance with the Christian ethic. He cannot believe that man is enslaved against his will to political forces beyond his control. The Christian believes that man has been freed by Christ from all powers in the world which might otherwise rigidly determine and control his history.³²

Such opinion was reinforced when Bishop Bell resigned from the Group. While Bell had suffered from several enforced absences from the Group's discussions due to health reasons, it was clear both he and MacIntyre represented the minority view within the Group. It was a case of numbers and philosophy. No matter how forcefully MacIntyre and Bell presented their approach the consensus of opinion was firmly in favour of, not the renunciation of nuclear weapons, but limiting their use in Buzzard's sense.

Both Bishop Bell and MacIntyre represented a stout defence of the nuclear pacifist and unilateralist CND position. Buzzard's approach was methodologically, theoretically, and morally wrong to the Campaigners. For Bell and MacIntyre the only policy for the Group to advocate was one where the Churches concentrated the whole of their energies on advocating a unilateral disarmament policy. The differences in approach between Bell and Buzzard could not be reconciled through discussion and conciliation, they were separate and diametrically opposed. The staff team of the Study Group, however, felt unable to accept this.

³² Thrall 1966, p.344.

Staff team members and Buzzard essentially shared a modified Government approach. Progress in disarmament was likely to come by an incremental piece by piece process. This enunciation of gradualism meant that if war broke out, after a certain amount of disarmament had taken place, then it would to that extent have to be limited. This was principally Buzzard's thesis. The CND's alternative policy was for the Churches to press purely for total nuclear disarmament. This as Keighley represented it, was unacceptable because it was just as much an "all or nothing" policy as massive retaliation. For Keighley, Bell's approach was a 'a counsel of despair': "Surely we have to repeat again and again what we believe as Christians to help to find ways in which the nations can begin to obey that judgement. Does that not in fact mean trying to rule out certain forms of armament while others are retained?"³³

It was not only Bell and MacIntyre who were critical of the Christian Church for its inability to stand together on the nuclear issue.³⁴ But the division was no new thing. For many of the Christians who became involved in CND, true Christianity had ceased when Constantine adopted it as his official state religion, and Augustine helped adapt it to the 'temporal' purposes which eventually built up the power-

³³ Keighley had made his attitude clear in a early letter to Bishop Bell dated 4th December 1957, BCC Box 14.

³⁴ See for example a powerful letter from Percy S. Beales to the Editor of *The Wiltshire and Gloucestershire Standard*, 24 May 1958.

complex known as Christendom. For them this was not what Christ taught:

It is Christendom that has failed not Christ...It is quite futile to engage in mud-slinging and cheap jibes as between and against the Churches on the one hand and pacifists on the other.³⁵

For these people the WCC, CCIA, and BCC had declared war to be against the will of 'God', and then thrown 'God's will' or Providence to the ravens by approving of war when it was "the lessor of two evils". It was as though God was seen as not capable of providing a third alternative. Even the Quakers, whose peace testimony against all war was respected throughout Christendom, were being criticised for lacking corporate unity on this matter.³⁶

Attitudes of BCC Associated Councils

As CND established itself as a mass movement various resolutions were passed by ecclesiastical bodies. Churches were aware of the depth of feeling in the country. Christians, as much as anyone else, read the newspapers and a look at any one of the 65 letters published by *The Times* alone between February 27 and March 27 1958³⁷ testified to the depth of feeling in the country. All the main Churches, in time, took a position on the gradualist or unilateralist issue. Here the Churches made an attempt to respond to the depth of public feeling. The numerically most important ecclesiastical

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Reprinted as *The Nuclear Dilemma*, The Times Publishing Co., 1958.

bodies were the Anglicans (Lambeth Conference), the Methodists and the Church of Scotland.

The Lambeth Conference of the Anglican Communion was divided. Whilst Owen Chadwick³⁸ asserts that the Conference united in asking the Government to abolish nuclear weapons, this is not the complete picture. *The Times* reported³⁹ that nuclear weapons was the one subject that divided the conference. It asserts there was no difference of opinion on any other subject. Lambeth essentially divided over whether there was any circumstance in which the use of nuclear weapons was acceptable. Some delegates supported CND's nuclear pacifist position, whilst others thought there were *just war* circumstances in which the use of these weapons was preferable to political enslavement by the Communists. There was, in any event, no agreement on the renunciation of the use of nuclear weapons.

For the Methodists, at their conference in Grimsby, there was confusion amongst the delegates over both the voting on the resolution and amendments dealing with nuclear weapons. Despite a strong Christian Citizenship Department, and a long tradition of leftist inclination in political matters, a strongly worded amendment calling for the unconditional and unilateral renunciation of the production and use of nuclear

³⁸ Chadwick 1991, p.100.

³⁹ *The Times*, 26 August 1958.

weapons was defeated.⁴⁰ With one hand the Methodists declared:

The dreadful devastation caused by such weapons and the possibly more dreadful consequent and persistent effects of radio-active contamination, make it extremely doubtful if a war so waged could achieve a good outweighing the evil it would involve. If the result of such a war is to make the world a desert and call it peace, it can no longer be presumed that there is a reasonable hope of victory for justice. Nor can it be argued that the extinction of a nation or a continent is in accordance with man's nature as a rational being or with Christian moral principles.⁴¹

Here the Methodists again referred back to the *just war* but concluded that nuclear weapons were incompatible with its requirements. They were resolving that the H-bomb did not allow war to be waged with any hope of achieving victory for justice "its method was not legitimate or in accordance with either man's nature as a rational being, or Christian principles and international agreements." Nevertheless with the other hand, and although the Conference went on record against the hydrogen bomb, their declaration also argued that "the conditions of 'just warfare' could be observed if the combatants agreed to wage war with a limited range of graduated and controllable nuclear weapons."⁴² As Groom recognises, this was just the sort of advice Admiral Buzzard was giving to the British Council of Churches.⁴³

The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland also rejected a resolution that called on Britain to commit itself

⁴⁰ *The Grimsby Evening Telegraph*, 15 April 1958.

⁴¹ Methodist Church Declarations 1959, p.44.

⁴² Ibid. p.45.

⁴³ Groom 1974, p.328.

to unilateral action. Whilst the Moderator of the Church of Scotland General Assembly (John Pitt-Watson⁴⁴) supported nuclear pacifism, the Church's Church and Nation Committee expressed the opinion that not until there was some constructive, positive act of policy could a halt be called to the race in nuclear weapons. The resolution called for a multilateral approach to disarmament. The Kirk's preference for 'realistic' pragmatism is clearly stated in its appeal on grounds political, moral, and theological for Britain to approach the Soviet Union and the USA and seek co-operative efforts in securing general disarmament.⁴⁵

Smaller ecclesiastical bodies were saying similar things. The General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches passed a resolution that called for the end to nuclear testing on genetic grounds but expressed no opinion on the rights and wrongs of manufacturing nuclear weapons and of using them as instruments of deterrence. The resolution urged the Government to seek immediate, but multilateral agreement under the supervision of a United Nations agency, for the cessation of all nuclear tests and the production of nuclear weapons. Calls for the unilateral abandonment of nuclear tests by Britain were defeated.⁴⁶

Many of these ecclesiastical bodies including the BCC, had felt able to give their support to the CND's predecessor NCANWT. Yet it was these same people who now refused to

⁴⁴ c.f. Chapters Three and Four of this thesis.

⁴⁵ *The Times* May 28 1957.

⁴⁶ *The Times* May 25 1957.

support CND. In terms of the BCC, the refusal to condone CND can be best seen as a consequence of a substantial gradualist shift in Council thinking about disarmament since the introduction of Buzzard's thesis.

Part II: The Gradualist Response

In March 1958, less than one month after the CND's inaugural meeting, Alan Keighley prepared a paper for the Study Group on the Moral Aspects of Disarmament presenting the issues before the Group as a stark choice between gradualism and unilateralism.⁴⁷ This discussion paper can be seen as the first coherent articulation of the gradualist approach by a member of the Group's staff team. The paper represents the intensification of gradualist thinking in BCC circles.

Secretary Keighley suggested that the Study Group should proceed with their remit by calling on the BCC to welcome the prospect of an early summit meeting between major heads of state. The greatest need was for increased confidence between Communist and non-communist countries. This could only be achieved, however, by recognising that agreement on major issues would have to await the establishing of "greater confidence," and discounting support for the type of unilateral action that the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament called for. The BCC should be mindful that an unprofitable meeting between the heads of state of the major world powers

⁴⁷ Keighley's paper entitled *The British Council of Churches' Study Group on the Moral Aspects of Disarmament: Discussion Paper for Meeting on March 6 1958*, dated 4 March 1958, BCC Box 14.

might lead to an increase of harmful tension and disillusionment. The Council should call upon British Christians, by prayer and an increased understanding of the complicated issues involved, to support the efforts of the British Government to find, in concert with other governments, means of relaxing the tension between East and West.⁴⁸

Secondly, Keighley argued that the Council should issue a statement that reminded people that war was contrary to the spirit, teaching and purpose of Jesus Christ. Whilst for Christian Campaigners this meant that all nuclear war should immediately be renounced, for others (especially limited war theorists) it meant, with equal sincerity, that in the present situation this aim would be more surely achieved by a gradual approach by all sides. The BCC should be advised to appeal to people to have faith in peace being achieved through multilateral political methods. The ultimate objective must not be in doubt: no war can be 'just' except in the relative sense as the lesser of two evils.⁴⁹ Once this just war foundation was built Keighley felt the Council could then argue that warfare waged by the most destructive modern means, such as the strategic (i.e. the H-bomb but not by smaller, less powerful 'tactical' weapons) nuclear bombs and missiles, were unrelated to any conceivably legitimate war aim. No State should have the right to threaten to commit whole populations to destruction, and any who survive to a dangerous

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

level of atomic radiation.⁵⁰ This meant following the Labour Party's approach:

The Council (should) therefore call upon Her Majesty's Government to seek, as a matter of utmost urgency, for an alternative to the strategic nuclear deterrent, as a basis for the national defence policy.⁵¹

In this way Keighley suggested Buzzard's recommendations as the sensible and most Christian alternative to the existing policy of massive retaliation. Here it was appropriate for the Council to issue a statement that respected and understood the widespread feeling of revulsion towards strategic nuclear weapons. It would be of the utmost necessity to point out to Christian people the practical consequences of unilateral renunciation.⁵²

Keighley saw the implications of British unilateralism on two levels. First, he thought it must be recognised that the real issue was not renunciation but control.⁵³ It was control that would ensure no country could use these weapons -- it was not enough for a Christian to simply declare strategic nuclear weapons abhorrent. Duty could only be fulfilled and responsible citizenship affirmed, if Christians sought to contribute to the control of these weapons. This was a crucial point. Keighley saw CND campaigners as both morally and politically wrong because they failed to combine moral fervour with responsible citizenship. For him it was only

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Keighley's paper entitled *The British Council of Churches' Study Group on the Moral Aspects of Disarmament: Discussion Paper for Meeting on March 6 1958*, dated 4 March 1958, BCC Box 14.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

through the facing up to responsibility that the danger from nuclear weapons be minimised. The attitude was that no advantage could be gained by what he saw as CND's hysterical outburst against nuclear weapons. What was needed was to understand the difficulties in which Prime Ministers and Governments are placed with the type of study the BCC's 'special group' was attempting.⁵⁴

For Keighley the second implication of CND's immediate and unilateral renunciation of strategic nuclear weapons was that it was a policy tantamount to absolute pacifism. If CND's principal objection to these weapons was a moral one there could be no question of sheltering Britain behind the nuclear shield of the United States. As Keighley understood the CND position, unilateral nuclear disarmament implied that the British should submit to a lower standard of living, in order to permit a vast increase in expenditure on conventional arms. For Keighley this was not an acceptable demand. The Council should affirm that there was no adequate way of defending Britain other than the threat of nuclear retaliation. Keighley conflates the nuclear pacifist position with the absolute pacifist when he declared, the only other alternative would be to consciously take the way of Christian pacifism -- a course not lightly to be entered upon.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

An Interim Statement

In April 1958 the various strands of thought pursued by the Study Group, and developed mainly by Mackie, Booth, and Keighley (under the shadow of Buzzard) began to come together. The last action taken by the BCC regarding nuclear weapons was the reception and communication of the Yale statements to Prime Minister Macmillan. Two separate developments, since then presented new opportunities for a BCC statement. The first of these was the Soviets' February 2 offer to suspend nuclear tests. The second development concerned the communication of an appropriate response to an address made by Dr. Frederick Nolde, Director of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA).⁵⁶

Nolde urged that the US Government should not regard their position as inflexible and unalterable. He accepted that the process of seeking agreements with the Soviet Union required negotiation with representatives of a government whose philosophy and outlook did not inspire confidence⁵⁷, yet still believed the US and Britain could seek agreement on a date after which nuclear testing should cease. Nolde hoped that ecumenical bodies, like the US Federal Council of Churches and their BCC counterparts, would take supporting action to this end.

⁵⁶ See transcript of Nolde's address *Next Steps: Prevention of War and Promotion of Peace*, 18 April 1958, BCC Box 14.

⁵⁷ Nolde justified this position by recalling the "many broken promises" and the tragedy of the 1956 Hungarian Uprising. Ibid. p.8.

Despite Nolde's appeal for concerted action the Study Group felt unable to "take up a position on the resolution, as it had not fully discussed the problems before it."⁵⁸ All Mackie felt able to do was give the Council a verbal indication of some of the topics which had so far occupied their study.⁵⁹ Sir Kenneth Grubb, however, was prepared to move another Private Member's motion with the approval of both the Study Group and the International Department. Because Grubb's motion covered only a limited part of the committee's concerns, the Group in full concurrence with the DIA,⁶⁰ felt able to recommend certain sentiments to the Council. The following was passed as an official BCC resolution at the Council's spring Assembly on the 22 April:

The Council welcomes the Prime Minister's statement on April 1st that it is the policy of Her Majesty's Government to negotiate a disarmament agreement which will provide for the ending or suspension of tests under proper conditions. We therefore urge Her Majesty's Government, in co-operation with the Government of the United States, to give a positive answer to the recent Russian initiative by agreeing to an immediate temporary suspension of nuclear tests so as to re-open the way for negotiations to progressive and controlled disarmament.⁶¹

Following normal BCC procedure the resolution was passed to the Prime Minister.

⁵⁸ Minutes of the Fourth Meeting of the Study Group on the Moral Aspects of Disarmament, 21 April 1958, BCC Box 14.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ There is some confusion over whether Grubb's resolution was passed in full concurrence of both the DIA and its surrogate Study Group. A letter from Keighley to Slack on 25 April 1958 argues that in no way was it moved on behalf of Group. Another letter from Keighley to Gordon Evans, United Nations Association, on the 19 May suggests it was passed in full concurrence of both bodies. See letters in BCC Box 14.

⁶¹ The resolution can be found in as a supplement to the BCC's 1955 publication *The Churches and the Hydrogen Bomb*.

Harold Macmillan doubted the wisdom of the suspension of British tests.⁶² The Government feared that such a step, in the present climate, would increase and not lessen the danger of war. The position of the Government, which had frequently been explained in the House of Commons and elsewhere, was that unilateral declarations of intention to suspend tests were in themselves of little value and that the suspension of tests should not be considered in isolation from other aspects of disarmament. What was needed in this field, as in other disarmament matters, was an international agreement including adequate measures of inspection and control. Macmillan's Government asserted that the only way to prevent proliferation was to stop the production of fissile material, under international control, as proposed by the United Nations in its November 1957 vote.⁶³

Macmillan's response to Grubb's resolution suggests that the Government saw the BCC's response as too extreme. The Group were disappointed with his reaction. The BCC never intended to involve themselves in a criticism of the Government. The avowed intention was not to embroil the BCC in any argument. Keighley consequently suggested Slack should write back to Macmillan pointing out that the BCC took particular care not to advocate anything more than a temporary suspension of tests at this juncture.⁶⁴

⁶² Letter from PM's Secretary (de Zulueta) to Keighley, 9 May 1958, BCC Box 14.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ See Memo. from Keighley to Slack 12 May 1958.

Towards a Report

Soon after Macmillan received notice of the BCC's Spring resolution the WCC's Commission, headed by Dr. Bilheimer, published *Christians and the Prevention of War in an Atomic Age*.⁶⁵ The authors of this report were drawn from several countries and denominations. Whilst there were some reservations of assent and emphasis, the Commission was at one when they announced:

We are agreed on one point, this is that Christians should openly declare that the all-out use of these weapons should never be resorted to. Moreover, that Christians must oppose all policies which give evidence of leading to all-out war. Finally, if all-out war should occur, Christians should urge a cease fire, if necessary, on the enemy's terms, and resort to non-violent resistance. We purposely refrain from defining the stage at which all-out war may be reached.⁶⁶

Paul Ramsey made the document the subject of a chapter in his important book *War and the Christian Conscience*. Here Ramsey characterises the report when he writes:

In a curious way this document stands squarely within the tradition of just-war theory, and yet not so squarely there, because of an unsureness and ambiguity introduced throughout, I can only say, by the Calvinistic impulse to transform the world gone to seed in an inarticulate pacifism that has in mind at every point the final and complete prevention of war. It stands squarely within the modern Protestant movement to 'renounce' war altogether (whatever that may mean), yet not so squarely there because of the lingering force exerted by the rightfulness under certain circumstances of the just or limited war.⁶⁷

This insight is useful and suggests an unresolved tension between nuclear pacifism and *just war* approaches in the WCCs

⁶⁵ See WCC, 1958.

⁶⁶ Ibid., Section 66.

⁶⁷ Ramsey 1961, p.114. Commentary in Potter 1969, pp.114-15.

findings. The WCC Commission was coming out strongly against massive retaliation but, like the BCC, felt unable to embrace CND-type renunciation. The alternative strategy for defence in the report was tantamount to a form of modern *just war*: the 'discipline' of possessing nuclear armaments but using them, if at all, in a limited way.⁶⁸ Indeed, the report allowed room for a version of the very approach Admiral Buzzard was recommending. If total war broke out despite these safeguards (and assuming there still was a humanity) it advocated an unconditional cease fire and King-Hall type pacifism.

Mackie read the WCC document and was impressed.⁶⁹ The problem in formulating a joint policy here, however, was that Mackie felt there was little real meeting of minds between empiricists (the practical or technical) and the theological. Mackie was of the opinion that the highlighting of this tension by the WCC called for a urgent review of official BCC policy towards the Study Group and its basis of policy formation.⁷⁰ Kenneth Grubb agreed and pointed out that a revised approach should seek to enunciate Christian principles by which Christians would be helped to formulate or criticise policy, even though the BCC themselves should not itself attempt to formulate that policy. He also felt that the BCC and DIA were failing in their duties because the current debate on disarmament was not really reflected in the

⁶⁸ WCC 1958, Section 40.

⁶⁹ Minutes of the Fifth Meeting of the Study Group on the Moral Aspects of Disarmament, 30 May 1958, BCC 14.

⁷⁰ This debate is repeated in a letter from Keighley to Slack, 25 April 1958, BCC Box 14.

Department's work, only in the Group's. Grubb was not sure how this could be done without producing a detailed study document.

Mackie brought his concerns, and Grubb's observations, before the Study Group on the 30 May 1958. It was here that Mackie suggested that the Group produce their own pamphlet.⁷¹ This was met with much approval. It was decided that such a pamphlet should be seen as a basis for discussion among Christians. It was envisioned that the pamphlet would explain why the old issue between pacifist and just war approaches was now irrelevant. This approach could henceforth create a new balance between the empirical and the theological in British Christian thinking without resorting to nuclear pacifism. British Christians needed strong guidance on facts and issues, and one based on a sufficiently considered theological foundation.⁷² The WCCs report would serve to carry the discussion forward.

In June 1956 the Labour MP Philip Noel-Baker, an important writer associated with disarmament problems since the League of Nations, published his new book *The Arms Race -- A Programme for World Disarmament*.⁷³ Booth and Grubb thought this book would be a worthy discussion point with which to begin the Group's projected pamphlet.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Minutes of the Fifth Meeting of the Study Group on the Moral Aspects of Disarmament, 30 May 1958, BCC Box 14.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ The enormous significance of this text in the development of strategic thinking is explored by Hedley Bull in his essay "Disarmament and the International System" in Garnett (ed.) 1970, pp.136-48.

⁷⁴ Booth mentions this to Keighley in a letter dated 12 June 1958,

Noel-Baker's book was an attempt to put disarmament and arms control into a wider theoretical perspective. This approach was unusual in idealist⁷⁵ circles because, as Groom notes, "the traditional so-called empirical approach held sway, with its melange of unstated theoretical assumptions and lack of 'hard data.'⁷⁶ Booth persuaded Noel-Baker to produce a memorandum which in effect summarised his book.⁷⁷ His thesis amounted to the proposal that attempts by the nuclear powers to reach partial disarmament schemes should be abandoned in favour of a more ambitious disarmament conference in which all the states of the world worked out a total scheme. This was another version of the multilateralist approach and one vindicated by the Group's final report.

The CCIA and WCC

As the Study Group proceeded with producing a report, two resolutions by the CCIA and WCC in the summer of 1958 served to influence thinking. Before these statements are considered it is necessary to note that disarmament efforts at this time were mainly geared to halting the testing of nuclear weapons or war-heads. Motives were two-fold: first, to stop the release of radiation, a world-wide health hazard; and second, to discourage proliferation. This first motive had, however, lost weight as soon as the ability to test explosions

BCC Box 14.

⁷⁵ Smith 1986, pp.54-67; Howard 1977, p.367; and Hedley Bull in Der Derian (ed.) 1995, p.185 all label Noel-Baker as idealist.

⁷⁶ Groom 1974, p.357.

⁷⁷ Memorandum by Noel-Baker, dated 26 June 1958, BCC Box 14.

underground was developed. Two important developments in 1958 were therefore encouraging the course of CCIA and WCC thinking. First, a conference of technical experts concluded that underground nuclear explosions could be detected by seismic and other devices.⁷⁸ Second, the three nuclear powers announced separately that they would suspend tests while attempting to negotiate a comprehensive Test Ban.⁷⁹

In August the CCIA announced that they were still concerned that countries had not made decisive progress towards disarmament.⁸⁰ Whilst recent developments afforded ground for hope many grave problems remained. The conference on technicians, by reaching agreement on the detection of tests, had made clear advances which might be applied to such fields as cessation of production and the danger of surprise attacks. The CCIA felt the Soviet offer to suspend tests, albeit conditionally, must be judged by its contribution to mutual trust and sound agreement. Christians in their eagerness for peace must henceforth not oversimplify tortuous questions because this needlessly opened the door to violation of justice and the reign of force. An 'open society' was one key to peace and first steps lay in making more friendships and contacts between peoples. This was particularly so because

⁷⁸ UN document A/3897, 21 August 1958, BCC Box 14.

⁷⁹ This moratorium continued until 1961 when first, the Soviets and then the US resumed testing. A period of intensive testing had therefore led to increased fears about radiation from nuclear fall-out.

⁸⁰ August 1958 Statement of CCIA Executive Committee, Nyborg. See BCC Box 14.

armament control involved teams of inspectors and there was a need to understand one another better.

The Central Committee of the WCC⁸¹ welcomed the efforts governments producing nuclear weapons had taken as a first step towards bringing the testing under international control. At the same time they urged that these efforts should be the beginning of attempts to halt the production of nuclear weapons and reduce existing armaments. Like the CCIA, the WCC called for an 'open society' where people could meet freely and learn to trust one another. The WCC appealed to the Churches to help prepare the way for such an open society.

By July 1958 the Study Group on the Moral Aspects of Disarmament had concentrated their efforts by setting up a specialised drafting sub-committee. They had been greatly encouraged in this respect by the prospect of a conference between the powers concerning the suspension of nuclear tests. It was this fact, the Group felt, that constituted a constructive step towards progressive and regulated disarmament. Mindful of these resolutions the Group's committee became responsible for the mechanics of drafting chapters and sending them to the larger Group for critical comment.⁸²

The drafting committee was originally made up by the five most influential Group members. The members of this committee were Robert Mackie, Alan Booth, Admiral Buzzard, Alan Keighley

⁸¹ August 1958 Statement by the Central Committee of the WCC. BCC Box 14.

⁸² Keighley to Slack, 3 July 1958, BCC Box 14.

and Edward Rogers. Analysis of the relevant primary sources however shows that only Mackie, Booth, Buzzard, and Rogers were responsible for the actual writing of the chapters. It was these who were largely responsible for the final product and would consequently determine the character of the subsequent report. Booth as much as Buzzard figures largely in the discussions and actual writing process.

The Report's Drafting

Chapters were completed and a draft available for discussion by the end of September 1958. Once the chapters had been written the sub-committee retired to Westminster College Cambridge (September 26-27th) where an intensive residential weekend served to highlight problems. When Keighley learnt he could not attend this weekend Kenneth Slack was asked to join the drafting sub-committee. The first chapter (written by Mackie) threw open the real moral issues by discussing the situation that faced those in authority. The second chapter (Booth in collaboration with Buzzard) aimed to discuss these issues in greater detail. The third chapter (Booth and Rogers) made recommendations in light of previous discussion. Chapter four (Booth and Buzzard) presented the contemporary dilemma of defence and disarmament. An appendix (Booth and Buzzard) would give factual information about nuclear weapons and their effects.

It was not just the BCC that were wrestling with the distinction between nuclear pacifism and the idea of a just

nuclear war. The Swiss Churches, for example, had divided on the question of nuclear armament in a similar way to the British Churches.⁸³ Whilst a Christian study conference in the United States had taken a firm line against nuclear just war. This interested Mackie.⁸⁴ To him it seemed that unilateralism had become a convincing argument amongst American Christians.⁸⁵ For Mackie this proved how careful the drafting sub-committee had to be in handling the issue. For his own part Mackie could not sympathise with the American refusal to discuss limited war, since it seemed a practical step between total war and the absence of hostility.⁸⁶ To Mackie nuclear weapons were like any other compromise necessary in international relations. For unilateralists in Britain, the States and elsewhere, however, it was seen as a lowering of standards if deterrence theory was even discussed.

The second draft of the report was ready by December. The drafting had been hard work. Booth's drafting had been particularly criticised.⁸⁷ Despite the drafting committee agreeing at Cambridge something to the contrary, Booth had put the whole report's argument in one of his chapters. As

⁸³ Mackie informs Keighley of this in a letter, 10 December 1958, BCC Box 14.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ It is interesting how radical US Churches were in the nuclear debate especially when compared to the British. Chapter Three of this thesis recalls how the US Federal Council of Churches were the first organised body to enunciate the nuclear pacifist position. Here, thirteen years later, the unilateralist approach was also been embraced.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ See for example Keighley to Booth, 17 December 1958. Norman Goodall was also considerably troubled by Booth's approach. Goodall went to see Slack to make the point that Buzzard's approach was only one approach to the problems before the Group. Keighley informs Mackie of this in a letter, 17 December 1958. Both letters BCC Box 14.

Keighley saw it this was a problem because there could be little justification for the BCC issuing a pamphlet which made clear the final recommendations before having gone through examining the moral issues involved.⁸⁸ Keighley thought it would be disastrous if the pamphlet was issued and even a small group of Council members attempted to disavow it -- as they might well have done on these grounds. Any publicity that came from this would certainly have been of the wrong kind.

A particular facet of Keighley's general criticism was the sure way the influence of Buzzard's ideas had entered at an early stage. Keighley was all for the discussion of Buzzard's views, but doubted whether they should intrude in this way.⁸⁹ He did support an overt discussion of Buzzard's theme much later in the pamphlet, but felt the drafts had not gone far enough in isolating the moral issues at stake.⁹⁰

Additions and alterations of emphasis to the drafts continued throughout December. Kenneth Slack, the BCC's International Department Secretary, saw the draft pamphlet and considered it extremely important and controversial.⁹¹ Because the reference terms of the Group was to advise the Council, he requested that it should not be available for general distribution before the BCC could discuss it. For this to be achieved it was decided that the final copy should

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Keighley to Mackie, 19 December 1958.

⁹¹ The Minutes of the Eighth Meeting of the Study Group into the Moral Aspects of Disarmament, 18 December 1958, BCC Box 14.

be at the printers by the third week in February. The pamphlet was hence set to be published before the spring meeting of the Council.

On the 22nd April 1959 the completed Report was presented by Mackie to the Council for consideration at its half-yearly meeting in London.⁹² The long awaited pamphlet had taken an incredible (considering the Oldham Report had taken only three weekends to produce) eleven months to produce. At the Council meeting the following resolution was passed: "The Council receives the pamphlet entitled *Christians and Atomic War* and authorises its publication, commending it for careful study of the issues raised, in the interest of an informed Christian opinion capable of influencing public policy."⁹³

Part III: Christians and Atomic War

The pamphlet *Christians and Atomic War: A Discussion of the Moral Aspects of Defence and Disarmament in the Nuclear Age* was the completed study of the Moral Aspects of Disarmament Group⁹⁴ appointed by the BCC. For purposes of clarity it will

⁹² Five thousand copies were printed. By September 1959 four thousand of these had been sold or distributed to BCC and WCC associated councils and Churches, Government representatives, strategic analysts, and various individuals. See Minutes of the Eleventh Meeting of the Study Group on the Moral Aspects of Disarmament, 23 September 1959, BCC Box 14.

⁹³ File ID/19/59 in Box 14.

⁹⁴ There are several differences in the composition of the two groups who wrote BCC Reports in 1946 and 1959. First, the 1959 Report was not authored by any women; second, the 1946 Report had three theologians/philosophers, the 1959 Report one; and three, whereas the 1946 Report had no politicians or technical experts, the 1959 Report had one MP and two technical experts. These differences, quite naturally, is reflected in the style of the reports. The former being more philosophical, the later heralding the much more technical BCC approach to defence influenced by Buzzard.

be shown which individuals authored which chapter. This is not indicated in the published document.

The Report began by defining the Group's responsibilities as outlined by the October 1957 Council Resolution. It added that the International Department or Council did not necessarily endorse the opinions expressed. The opening chapter, written by Robert Mackie, explained the purpose of the pamphlet. It defined the Group's goal as seeking a pragmatic approach to defence and disarmament. This started with the fact of power in relationships between States. Disarmament as a 'concept' was dealt with in this fashion because it was thought Christians could not divorce their 'responsibility' for defence from a practical consideration of the likely 'consequences' of a particular course of action. Reviewing the situation meant considering the intentions of those responsible for defence. The Group felt that, in forming opinions and making recommendations, they were applying themselves to the actual situation before them. In realist fashion the Group applied themselves to situations 'as they are', not as they 'could' or 'ought to be'. This was the crux of the argument. Competing traditions, pacifist and non-pacifist alike, had legitimacy. It was down to Christians to make a unique contribution:

This pamphlet is offered as a contribution to Christian thinking on the disarmament problem and defence policy in the nuclear age. It is designed to encourage responsible reflection and political action by individuals. This is the necessary basis of responsible statements by church groups, whether local or national. The pamphlet starts with the fact of power in the relationship between

nations, and particularly with the political and military decisions which Britain must take in its own defence, and in the interests of the wider policies with which it is in sympathy, and the nations with which it is allied.⁹⁵

The Group conceded that many lines of study and discussion sprang from the Oldham Report.⁹⁶ They acknowledged other possible approaches to the problem. These were defined as: (i) the absolute pacifist approach; (ii) that which considers disarmament without considering defence (i.e. nuclear pacifism); and (iii) that which seeks to solve outstanding questions which cause international tension (i.e. in IR terms a Kantian-type idealism). It is significant, given the understanding of unilateralism as democratic protest, that most CND supporters would probably have associated their position not with the 'irresponsibility' of (ii) but more as a practical expression of position (iii).⁹⁷

The first way, the pacifist way, contended that "it is a valid Christian position to suggest that full Christian obedience involves the refusal to participate in war..."⁹⁸ Yet "those who take this view recognise that it involves them in the agonising dilemma of being inescapably involved in society and yet contracting out of some of their obligations to it."⁹⁹ Whilst a minority¹⁰⁰ within the Group had felt it

⁹⁵ *Christians and Atomic Power: A Discussion of the Moral Aspects of Defence and Disarmament in the Nuclear Age. Report of a Group appointed by the BCC, n.d. but 1959, London: BCC Publications*

⁹⁶ See Chapter Four of this thesis.

⁹⁷ c.f. Marx: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it." *Theses on Feuerbach XI* in McLellan (ed.) 1977, p.158.

⁹⁸ *Christians and Atomic War*, p.1.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.2.

¹⁰⁰ *The Christian World* (30 April 1959) asserts that Norman Goodall was the only orthodox pacifist in the Group.

was possible to rebel against the State and still be faithful to God, the majority felt that for most Christians this could not be seen as a sufficient answer to the questions before it. In this sense:

Christian pacifism can be defended in terms of individual acts of obedience and faith. It has not -- in the view of the Group -- found clear articulation in terms of a political policy that can be responsibly adopted by a government. It is this kind of responsibility -- in which Christians as citizens are inescapably involved -- that the mandate of and task of the Group are directed.¹⁰¹

The second way for Christians to approach the nuclear dilemma was to argue that the real concern of the Churches should be with disarmament and not defence. Here nuclear pacifists argued that by considering defence before disarmament the real pressure for disarmament is lost. The Group disagreed. They felt there was more value in studying defence first, not only because of the moral issues involved in it, but because any step towards disarmament must involve the lessening, or altering, of defence measures which were a primary duty of the State.

A third way would be for Christians to follow the ways prefigured by Kant and suggest that the 'moral aspects' of disarmament and defence were not confined to technical questions. Because both defence and disarmament depended upon the state of the world, the best way to end the production of nuclear weapons would be to remove the need for them. Settlement of disputes and removal of injustices, by peaceful

¹⁰¹ *Christians and Atomic War*, p.2.

means, were essential steps in any advancement towards disarmament. The Group conceded that there was a pressing need to deal with this 'larger setting' but that their intention was restricted to focusing Christian thinking on the dangers of nuclear armaments and the urgency of steps to limit them.

The Moral Aspects of Disarmament and Defence

The position of the Group was that the primary loyalty of Christians was to God, coupled with the realisation that Christians are not in any way detached from the world:

All of us owe our livelihood, our standard of living, our democratic freedoms, to the present position of Britain in the world. In so far as we believe we should accept those benefits, we must face the facts that that they are dependent upon the use of political and military power. It is therefore irresponsible not to try to understand, 'the disarmament problem and defence policy'.¹⁰²

In earlier centuries Christians were able to remain detached from the cruder aspects of State power. Weapons were now in existence which, once used, no public opinion could affect. This meant: "we must now live with the bomb, or with the possibility of it being made."¹⁰³

In a fashion similar to the Oldham Report's 'Platonism', the problems of defence were ones that could only be gradually solved and the dilemmas they raised not 'ignored'.¹⁰⁴ The

¹⁰² Ibid., p.3.

¹⁰³ *Christians and Atomic War*, p.3.

¹⁰⁴ It is significant that the pacifist 'voice' on the 1946 Oldham Commission and CND activist, Donald MacKinnon, was particularly critical of such Christian Platonism. In his 1968 Gore Memorial lecture (re-printed in MacKinnon 1969 pp.12-40) MacKinnon argued that Christianity had been truly damaged by those who inflicted Plato's flight from the tragic into theological fancy as the ultimate religious category.

Group hence saw their contribution as a Christian study on the moral aspects of defence. Their duty was to comment on the nature of policy and assess the implications of the means used to prosecute that policy from the perspective of Christianity. The Report's authors did not believe Britain could be legitimately defended without taking the consequences for Britain, and the whole world, into urgent consideration.. This movement away from 'middle axioms' was justified because "The whole meaning of 'defence' has been altered. The validity of the concept is in question"¹⁰⁵.

Defence and disarmament were not just problems but dilemmas: "that is, they are not problems for which there are a complete set of answers, problems which can be absolutely solved by any reasoning or any device available to us, problems that have solutions devoid of evil. They are, instead, problems to be suffered with, to be lived with, to be controlled, to be mitigated, to be gradually reduced to some manageable proportions -- to be completely overcome, if at

MacKinnon may well have had the BCC in mind when he decried the way an uncritical trust in God's providential care inevitably leads to a view which sees little else in this-world but political dilemmas, false, 'tragic' or necessary. MacKinnon pursued this theme in *Borderlands of Theology* when he wrote: "Too often today we fob off men and women crying out for a world of hope with an academically precise pessimism, which seems to glory less in the cross than in the disintegration of human societies and the coming of despair. We have reached the truly appalling position of pointing to the threat of the atom bomb as evidence of the disorder of our being, and at the same time, like men in a trance, accepting and preparing to follow to the end the way to which such expedients belong, calling it our western way of life" (1968a, p.149). The problem with such thinking, as Elshtain has argued elsewhere, was that "locked into dangerously self-confirming ways of thinking, embracing 'progress' as a standard of evaluation, we manage to convince ourselves that good will come out of horrendous things; that somehow, in history, the end does justify the means" (Elshtain 1985, p.51).

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

all, only in the fullness of time"¹⁰⁶. This 'realistic attitude' was supported by the WCC Evanston Assembly in August 1954.¹⁰⁷ Disarmament could only come about with 'patience and persistence'. Every Christian must make up their own mind, and then do all they can to further the policies they believe to be best in the circumstances.

The pamphlet did not intend to be a theology in relation to nuclear armaments.¹⁰⁸ Whilst many Churches had published such statements, and member Churches of the WCC had continually considered the issues, the Group were concerned rather with 'the moral aspects' -- the 'means' of defence and disarmament. This involved comprehending that Christians lived in a moral universe where God reigned supreme. This order, Augustine would have agreed, stands fast in peace and war. If people should violate its demands so grievously as to extinguish all earthly life, the inexorable justice of God would still be vindicated not impugned.¹⁰⁹ Although all live in a moral universe, this universe is more than a moral order. The crucial difference between the Christian view and that of other religions was:

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p.4.

¹⁰⁷ The WCC Resolution argued that, "Without forsaking their convictions that all weapons of war are evil, the Churches should press for restraints in their use. Christians in all lands must plead with their governments to be patient and persistent in their search for means to limit weapons and advance disarmament'. See BCC Box 14.

¹⁰⁸ See Oldham Report in 1946 for many relevant and challenging passages.

¹⁰⁹ The Report here refers to the US Federal Council of Churches 1944 publication *Atomic Warfare and the Christian Faith: Report of the Commission on the Relation of the Church to the War in the Light of the Christian Faith*. December 1944 (supplement March 1946). See Chapter Four.

...not simply that a higher ethical standard runs through this moral universe, a standard which can be described as 'Christian morality'. The distinctive Christian testimony is that God is *within* this moral order as well as beyond it and controlling it. He is within it as Christ was completely within history, within the human nature in which He was incarnate and within the stuff of the world's corporate life. But He is within it to redeem it by that power which is also beyond it and which lies behind all other power.¹¹⁰

Because of this the Report contained much that was technical and political. Its suggestions had to be 'realistic' and keyed to the possibilities of the national and global situation. There were no short cuts to disarmament or world peace. There was no easy optimism about the future. Yet it was believed that Christians should battle against the odds and never give up trying to be practical.

A Christian Approach

Chapter two of the Report, written by Alan Booth and Admiral Buzzard, comprised an overview of the defence and disarmament situation facing the West in the late 1950s. It was concerned with understanding the problems facing those who defended Britain. It was assumed the British and Western states had a responsibility to provide military defences against the encroachment of totalitarian regimes. This meant in effect "... to protect their own way of life, to serve the cause of law and justice, or to keep open the road to an international system in which power is made the servant of law...."¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ *Christians and Atomic War*, pp.5-6.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.6.

The chapter goes into great detail outlining the defence and disarmament situation as regards the Cold War situation in Europe, the Middle East, and the Far East. The first point made was that:

...there can be few illusions on either side at the moment that serious military operations...would imply a purpose of dealing something approaching a mortal blow, and would be resisted with great violence. This is the area therefore, which is least likely to breed intentional war. But this fact does not dispose of our difficulties for two reasons -- the danger of war by mistake, and the consideration that the apparent stalemate depends on the existence of effective military power on both sides.¹¹²

'Russia' had available about 60 divisions in Eastern Europe, whilst NATO had 20 in Western Europe. NATO forces, armed with nuclear weapons, were designed to deter the Soviets from exploiting this military advantage:

This is the reason why official policy of the West, of NATO and of the United Kingdom is to threaten to *initiate* nuclear attack on Russia if she began any serious aggression in Europe. And were nuclear weapons to be abandoned, they would in present circumstances have no coherent military defence left for Europe.¹¹³

Such a 'terrible dilemma' had compelled authorities to look for some means of escape. The problem was that if the Soviets launched a limited attack (say Berlin, Scandinavia or Turkey) the danger was that the West's massive retaliation strategy would meet it with thermo-nuclear war. If the Allies did not use nuclear weapons the Soviets would have succeeded in calling a great bluff, and the question posed: Could the Alliance survive if Allies had to expect each other to commit

¹¹² Ibid., p.7.

¹¹³ Ibid.

suicide to defend one frontier? Furthermore: Did this policy not set a premium on each state having its own thermo-nuclear weapons under independent control? These kind of questions were forcing the West to review nuclear strategies and seek one that established a reasonable chance of matching smaller outbreaks with a response proportional to threat.

One of the problems facing the West was that some analysts viewed any weakness in resolution to use nuclear weapons as making war more likely, whilst others increasingly saw an 'all or nothing' policy as either a bluff which events might call, or as a totally irresponsible way of handling thermonuclear power. This final group believed megaton weapons should only be used to neutralise the enemy, that is to deter the enemy from using them or from bringing them to the conference table; and to ensure that if war broke out there was the strongest possible incentive for the enemy to control and limit its violence since they know there was no length they could go to without fear of equivalent reprisal. Holders of this limited war approach wished to see the West escape from any necessity to use those weapons first. The problem was that there must be a means found with which to match the numerical and geographic advantages of the Soviet Union. If the West could not match the Soviets 'gun for gun' it raised the question of smaller nuclear weapons. Such weapons could be shot from guns, dropped from the air, or carried in short range missiles: NATO tactical plans were based on the assumption

that these will be used. Another dilemma that this created, however, was: How can the West use them without starting a nuclear war that will not stop short of the biggest bombs? A crucial point, therefore, was that whilst radiation was more limited in the smaller 'clean' versions, "both developments...depend on the ability to conduct further nuclear testing at least on a restricted scale."¹¹⁴

Although these 'tactical' nuclear weapons were accepted as normal issue to NATO they still required urgent attention. It was necessary to educate people in the need to establish limitations before war, and announce general intentions for the conduct of war itself. This need for pressure was particularly urgent because the official Government view was that such decisions could not be taken and announced for hypothetical situations, it was considered better to keep the enemy guessing. This uncomfortable situation meant:

...it is clear that at present the West would not hesitate to be the first to use nuclear weapons of smaller size, and against military targets, in order to halt large-scale conventional aggression. And the reason is that the West has at present no practical alternative for discouraging the outbreak of war.¹¹⁵

The chapter goes on to summarise Western defensive options.

The Situation

The first option involved 'Preparations for Total war'. Official policy at the beginning of 1959 was peace by the 'balance of terror'. The numerical superiority of Soviet

¹¹⁴ *Christians and Atomic War*, p.9.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

conventional forces in Europe had led to a strategy that involved the West being ready to *initiate* total nuclear war on the Soviet Union. To the Group this massive retaliation policy raised serious doubts on both moral and technical grounds.

Under the heading 'Preparations for Limited war' the Report outlined Western policy options. These included preparations to counterbalance Communist conventional forces by equipping armies with small nuclear weapons (i.e. tactical nuclear weapons) that had strictly localised effects with regards to both blast and radiation. This policy, however, still left the West in the position of having to *initiate* nuclear war in certain circumstances, even if on a limited scale, in order to offset the superiority of Russian conventional forces. Such a strategy created local balances of power which reduced the danger that one side or the other would be driven or tempted to risk all-out war. The problem was that the Soviet Union also possessed these weapons and the danger was that, on the outbreak of war, they might try to gain an advantage by 'stepping up the size'. Avoiding this meant increasing conventional forces:

Every move in this direction provides some relief from danger. The tragic and fateful possibility exists, however, that our society is now of a kind which will prefer not to meet the cost of this relief, but to choose to maintain its material living standards instead. In that case we could not blame 'the government' for our predicament.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p.16.

Total war was not, however, the main problem. The chief problem was how to prevent small, but carefully prepared outbreaks of violence, escalating into nuclear conflict.

Buzzard and Booth felt their survey showed that methods of defence had great repercussions on the whole complex of British relations with other states -- 'enemies', allies, and neutrals. Defence made sense only as a means for on one hand, the exercise of a decisive yet constructive foreign policy, and on the other, the vehicle for the pursuit of disarmament. Defence plans must be shaped to harmonise with all other responsibilities and relationships in order to take a coherent view. This meant:

... the quarrel between Communist powers and the West is not felt to be of primary importance in comparison with the problems of creating new nations and solving their economic problems. Defence policies which attempt to hitch half the world behind our own particular chariot are self-defeating. But a refusal to recognise a defence problem at all is not less obscurantist. An obvious objective would be to enable new nations to defend themselves, by helping them to build up their military potential. The advantage however has to be weighed against their prior need of butter before guns, and the political consequence of putting military power at the disposal of untried and hard pressed governments.¹¹⁷

The West, Britain in particular, needed to acknowledge that 'true defence' against the threat of thermonuclear weapons lay in successful disarmament agreements. One of the Report's main objectives was thus to show that the possibility of disarmament agreements were substantially affected by the kind of defence preparations Britain adopted.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p.17.

Defence and Disarmament

A major problem was that in Britain defence and disarmament were handled by two different Government departments.¹¹⁸ While co-ordinating machinery existed and it was unlikely that one would propose a scheme for disarmament which defence people regarded as dangerous, it was not unlikely that the other party would proceed with defence plans without too much reference to their influence on disarmament. This meant that the West was compelled to offer a 'package deal' on disarmament, i.e. one which exchanged nuclear disarmament for a substantial reduction in the conventional and other armaments of the Communist bloc. Any approximation to a balance at these lower levels would certainly make easier an offer on nuclear arms. Disarmament, however, could only be seriously considered if it involved a reliable system of inspection. What this meant was that:

Somehow, therefore we have to learn to live with nuclear weapons, at least for many years. If we cannot abolish them, we must do everything possible to bring them under control. And if large steps like this prove too difficult, then we should be satisfied initially in taking such small steps as are possible. Hence the need for achieving anything we can in stopping tests, guarding against surprise attack, and preventing the spread of nuclear weapons to other countries¹¹⁹.

The argument was: in the negotiation on tests, if agreement cannot be gained for the high degree of inspection required to achieve complete cessation, then there was much to be said for settling for the cessation of all tests which could not be

¹¹⁸ It is not clear which department Buzzard and Booth thought handled disarmament -- presumably they were referring to the Foreign Office.

¹¹⁹ *Christians and Atomic War*, p.19.

readily inspected and which were most harmful to health. Yet it should not be forgotten that "the fact of possession in itself ensures an influential voice in the conduct of foreign policy of the western alliance."¹²⁰ In terms of immediate policy this situation could be improved by placing nuclear weapons under international control -- the control of NATO. Whilst this may not have been possible for the USA, in its unique position of power, for Britain 'prudence and statesmanship' was the correct policy.

In sum, Booth and Buzzard's chapter argued that there were three conditions that favoured successful disarmament agreements: first, that the parties involved appreciated the need to reduce the armament load. Increasing costs, apprehension on health grounds regarding testing, and the apprehension of a uncontrollable proliferation of nuclear states all worked favourably to secure this end. Second, that there was a rough 'balance of power' on both sides. This meant halting the race in thermonuclear weapons and a closer approximation to balance at lower 'tactical' levels. Finally, that there were secure means available to verify disarmament agreements. Systems of inspection and control were fundamental here. Buzzard and Booth argued that Britain should internationalise its nuclear weapons even though "...to put them in the hands of those 'not responsible to parliament' -- appears a tremendous abdication of sovereignty. But is the appearance false in so far as that kind of

¹²⁰ Ibid., p.20.

sovereignty has long since evaporated with the disappearance of the island fortress and its exchange for the role of Europe's bull's eye?¹²¹"

The Christian Approach

Alan Booth and Edward Roger's 'chapter three' looked at some of the implications of such discussion. These included (i) theological considerations; and (ii) a critical analysis of the choices before Government. It argued that all Christian ideas on defence, whatever their starting point, had their place in forming Christian judgement.¹²² Christians should, however, remember that:

...it is part of the secularisation of the times that men think there must be a simple way forward to 'broader sunlit uplands' of historical progress. The Christian, while full of longing and hope, knows that history is not like that. His abiding confidence does not lie in any certainty that history will work itself out to a millennium but rather that it will remain a struggle of good and evil until the day God chooses to complete His purpose and bring all things to their end....¹²³

Optimism alone would not make matters better. Indeed: "as the Christian seeks his duty in the nuclear age, he will not be surprised to find that there is no way at one stroke to abolish the dangers in which mankind stands. A thousand acts of disobedience creates a tangle which demands the patience of a thousand acts of faithfulness to begin to unravel. And that requires a close and detailed study of the knot itself, in all its obstinate reality."¹²⁴ What was needed was a new

¹²¹ Ibid., p.21.

¹²² Ibid., p.22.

¹²³ *Christians and Atomic War*, p.22.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

examination of Christian duties. On one hand, by standing back from a close examination of defence problems and looking at them afresh in the larger Christian picture. On the other hand, by looking at actual choices and seeing if it was possible to judge between them in the light of Christian duty. There were several questions to answer here.

The first question was: Is the issue between the West and Communism an ultimate one? The core of this was that:

... our faith calls in question at once the kind of self-righteousness which proclaims the West-East conflict as simply the confrontation of good and evil. ...Christians therefore must look beyond conflict to reconciliation. Our resistance to what we believe dangerously wrong in the Communist method and objective must be of a kind that looks beyond the real but partial issues of the moment to the day when our enemies are overcome in a repentance to which we ourselves contribute as well as they. The man who knows how great is his own cancelled debt should make a bad debt-collector.¹²⁵

What this meant, in terms of defence policy, is that Christians were governed by the necessity to match a resolute defence of the public interest with temperateness and restraint in the means used. The 'door of reconciliation' must always be left open and Christians must love their neighbours as themselves allies and enemies alike.

The second question that Christians need to answer was: Are Western values worth defending? This involved a consideration of the fact that:

Peace is not simply the absence of armed conflict, but the state of human affairs in which men are enabled to be true men in their relationship with one another Dedication to peace involves a constant and costly responsibility for our neighbours, that the life open to

¹²⁵ Ibid., pp.23-4.

them may be of the kind for which they were created. This is the potentiality which is worth defending.¹²⁶

The third question that demanded a response was: Are power and force proper instruments for states to use in the light of nuclear weapons? This involved facing yet another dilemma -- the dilemma in which the Christian is both citizen and church-goer.

Christian Political Responsibility

Booth and Rogers believed Christian service began with a particular witness. They recognised that, in Augustinian fashion, the functions of the State and Church were fundamentally different. In order to behave 'justly' the State must have the right and power of compulsion, not only to restrain the criminal but crucially "to pursue any coherent policy amidst the clash of a multitude of wills."¹²⁷ It was vital that such force and compulsion were tempered by 'necessity' and subject to 'humane laws'. The problem remained, however, that the realm of international relations was necessarily anarchical. Indeed without:

... the slightest development of law, and until there is in sight some international authority to enforce law, the situation is in the strict sense one of anarchy. Christians with many others are concerned to develop international organs of law and order and to preserve the authority of such as already exist, the International Court of Justice, for instance. But nothing is gained by exaggerating their present capacities or imagining that at such a moment of spiritual confusion as the present, an international rule of law enforced by international government is just round the corner.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Ibid., pp.25-6.

¹²⁷ *Christians and Atomic War*, p.26.

¹²⁸ Ibid., pp.26-7.

Whilst it was accepted that 'international order' was built on State enforced structures of power, Booth and Rogers argued that a long Christian tradition existed to temper excessive use of force. *Just war* theory taught that the exercise of force by a State could be justified only to the extent that the cause it was used to defend was grave enough to balance the evil it produced. In the same way that certain uses of force to catch domestic criminals could constitute a threat to democratic liberty, there were degrees of international force, now in British possession, that would cause devastation out of all proportion to the gain. The tendency in the last two Great Wars had been to throw all available force without restraint, and it was this that had called into question the role of force in international affairs. Nuclear weapons had brought humanity to the end of this particular *Realpolitik* road. It was the *just war* or the limited war that offered a means with which to turn back along this path to find a more humane alternative. Bearing this in mind, the authors felt a need to look again at the practical situation disclosed earlier and ask whether Christian insight could suggest right choices in defence and disarmament.

Limited War as *Just War*

This section posed the key issue: is it right to continue deliberately to threaten the initial use of nuclear weapons? Was it possible to escape from this position? Massive retaliation dictated that it was the West that was in the

danger of threatening to be the first to use nuclear weapons. Because the Group felt nuclear weapons, especially thermonuclear weapons, represented the use of force and destruction out of all proportion to any human ends they might serve, a first duty was to work for policies to get the West out of this position. The possession of megaton weapons could only be justified if it was the sole practical means of inhibiting adversaries from using them. Until a system was devised to put this power out of the reach of international conflict then it had to be the 'bitterest problem' because for it to work either side had to believe that retaliation was a danger to be reckoned with. The Group accepted that this problem could not be solved by reasoning alone, thus:

A first duty is to work for policies that get the West out of this position with the utmost speed.... To avoid the dilemma of having to initiate the use of these weapons, as at present, the West would need to increase manpower and equipment for conventional forces very considerably.¹²⁹

Another step in the process of control and mitigation seemed clear. It was not necessary to surpass the enemy in 'frightfulness' in order to prevent them from using nuclear weapons, it was necessary rather to face them with the certainty of severe retaliation to make the adventure too costly. Christians should bear in mind "it is not his (i.e. the enemy's) destruction that Christians seek, but a restraint upon his power to destroy."¹³⁰ It remained technically necessary, however, to ensure nuclear retaliation could take

¹²⁹ Ibid., pp.27,16.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p.27.

place for this was preferable to guaranteeing to match the utmost the enemy could do.¹³¹

The Cost in Money and Sovereignty

The road leading away from the West's reliance on total war weapons would involve reliance on nuclear weapons in the small ranges. This was not desirable, but it was an inescapable stage on the way to reducing the danger of massive retaliation. The objective must be to escape, if possible, from this 'necessity' also. Two obstacles lay in the way of securing this objective.

First, the fact that building up conventional forces to hold situations, then defended by nuclear weapons, would cost money. Because of this "it is a proper duty of Christians to help our society to see the hard choice with which it is presented, that if it wants to escape present dangers it will be expensive."¹³²

Second, escaping from the reliance on nuclear weapons called for a more co-ordinated defence effort by the West. This was no easy task:

Here Christians, for whom patriotism ought to be ennobled by a larger view of mankind, have witness to give to a God who raises up nations and brings them down, and who is surely calling us to-day to adventure in wider loyalties than those of the nation states of recent centuries. The traditional pattern of national sovereignty is under judgement and an attempt to cling to it may well be one of the reasons for our present dangers.¹³³

¹³¹ *Christians and Atomic War*, p.27.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p.28.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p.29.

Christians should, therefore, serve as a stabilising influence that ensured a conflict 'begun with rifles' did not extend to a thermonuclear exchange. Military operations must not be directed to force unconditional surrender, but simply to secure the enemy's adherence to a 'just pattern of international behaviour'. Another way to inhibit the rapid spread of hostilities would be to take the military and psychological preparation necessary to reduce danger because "if the public and the enemy know that a policy exists to limit rigidly the military response to an attack, and keep it proportionate to the threat offered, there is less chance that misunderstanding or panic will provoke an unintentional catastrophe."¹³⁴ The Group felt strongly that the existence of such standing orders, if they were known, would be a strong incentive for the enemy to also exercise restraint. Restraint was the key Christian objective.

The Christian Community

The Report had thus focused on the discrimination Christians could bring to bear on public policy. This raised the question about how the Churches should be orchestrating the debate. For the authors the characteristic contribution of the Church was to exhibit a new order of being. Such a vision worked by precept and example, by the kind of people it nourished. It had several dimensions.

¹³⁴ Ibid., pp.29-30.

In the first place it was a community of people whose hope was fixed on God. The very horror of the dangers that surrounded humanity was a temptation to fear. In fact there was never a greater need for Christians to control their passions. In short "such people ought to be able to go on thinking clearly and wisely when others around them greatly need that service. As a stabilising factor in the community they will have a role to play not less important because it is so hidden in the daily round."¹³⁵ In the second place the Church was, or should be, the open society *par excellence*: the people who acknowledged the partial and corrupted nature of all achievements. In this way "the worship and prayer of the Church...[could serve as] the prophylactic of mankind against the disease of political fanaticism"¹³⁶. Third, the Church's own peace should be exhibited. The Church should be a place where people looked for a unity 'over-arching the political curtains of the day'.¹³⁷ With this final point it is possible to condense the report's basic findings.

(A) General Recommendations:

(1) The debate on the nuclear situation should be an open one and the public should be treated as adults and given 'reasonable access to the facts'.¹³⁸

(2) Defence and disarmament should be treated as complementary, not competing, aspects of State policy. The

¹³⁵ *Christians and Atomic War*, p.30.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.31.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

Governmental machinery for integrating defence and disarmament policy should be designed accordingly. The danger in pursuing a defence policy too narrowly, and out of relation to other aspects of foreign policy was that "in considering defence before disarmament the real pressure for disarmament may be lost."¹³⁹

(3) Every effort must be made to get the West out of a position in which it may be tempted to use nuclear weapons first.¹⁴⁰

(B) Policy Recommendations:

(1) "The first duty here is to accept the fact that the race for supremacy in total war is vain."¹⁴¹ This acknowledgement made it easier to agree upon the cessation of thermonuclear tests and limit the multiplication of nuclear powers.

(2) Britain should be particularly aware of not clinging to her 'special relationship' with the USA. She should watch that her own development of megaton armaments was not dictated by a misguided ambition to hold a special place in the sharing of defence secrets with the USA. The acceptance of Britain's due role in the western alliance suggested a switch of resources from total war capabilities to those forms of lesser

¹³⁹ *Christians and Atomic War*, p.31

¹⁴⁰ There is some ambiguity on this point. It is not apparent whether this constituted an advocacy of a 'no first use' policy just for strategic (thermonuclear) or for tactical (atomic) devices. If the Report was advocating, as it seems to be, a 'no first use' policy for all nuclear weapons (i.e. both atomic and thermonuclear) there is severe inconsistency in logic. John Elford has made the point (1985, p.198) that the doctrine of flexible response (i.e. the modern term for limited war approaches) depends upon the early, and possibly first, use of tactical nuclear devices and that to qualify it by denying such a first was to call it totally into question.

¹⁴¹ *Christians and Atomic War*, p.32.

armaments (i.e. conventional weapons) that would allow Britain to meet threats more 'soberly and rationally'.

(2) The Government should work for a greater balance of power *vis-à-vis* lower levels of armaments. Costs cannot be allowed to rise without limit but "...if our western society faces a choice between comfortable living standards plus nuclear defence, and reduced living standards plus less risky armament, then the Christian has a duty to make his voice heard."¹⁴²

(3) The British government should marry firmness with restraint in the exercise of international affairs. If war occurred the main objective must be to halt aggression and restore the *status quo* as the basis of negotiation.

(4) Hostilities should never be entered into without a public announcement of limited objectives. There should be a clear public statement of the limits which the West proposes to observe in waging war "so long as, at each stage, the enemy also observes them."¹⁴³

(5) Britain should give a lead in international affairs by offering to co-ordinate her defence programme more closely with her allies. The Government should be willing to abate its claim to national sovereignty, both towards her allies and towards the Soviets, with regard to an international system of control and inspection.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Ibid., p.33.

¹⁴³ *Christians and Atomic War*, p.34.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

(C) Recommendations for the Individual Christian:

(1) The call to service in the defence forces or its reserves, or in the industrial and scientific activity that supports them, is one calling which Christians must face and not evade. This "pamphlet may be judged as supplying some of the facts on which (such) a responsible decision rests"¹⁴⁵.

(2) In the event of war it the Christian's civic duty and privilege "to give succour to their fellows and seek to preserve such shreds of humanity as survive."¹⁴⁶

(3) Christians have the task of working for the development of the "open society" which their country claims to defend with arms -- this meant "to resist encroachments prompted by a narrow concept of defence, to enlarge the area of justice and the respect for minorities, to subject power in society to the rule of law and to protect the weak and powerless."¹⁴⁷

(4) Christians needed to face the nuclear issue with: "the absence of panic, the hard discipline of facing facts however grim with an honest gaze, and freedom from narrow and unworthy passions -- and all this in a temper of unyielding concern for human welfare"¹⁴⁸.

Conclusion

This chapter began by arguing that the formation of the CND in 1958 did not create a new situation for the British Churches rather, as Driver pointed out, it only intensified

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p.35.

¹⁴⁶ *Christians and Atomic War*, p.35.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., pp.35-6.

and polarised reactions which had already found expression.¹⁴⁹ To the British political and religious Establishments CND's birth became a pertinent symbol of growing rebellion against existing structures of authority and accepted ways of policy making. CND proved to be an agency for a progressive but informal 'ecumenicalism' (i.e. a forum for uniting Christians) which formal ecumenicalism had failed to do, because nuclear weapons proved to be a more focused standard of judgement with which to foster unity. Its principal of criticism was more focused, less abstract, with specific goals to secure. The CND programme constituted an idealist (people-centred) alternative to realist state-centricity. The unilateralists were ideologically opposed to Buzzard's limited war realism. To Campaigners, the Group's limited war approach was not appreciably different to the massive retaliation doctrine expounded by the British State. For them the Study Group's defence of gradualism only resulted in the loss of real pressure for disarmament. The moral judgement of the CND began from a different position to that of the BCC. CND rallied against the very tendency, exemplified by the BCC's Study Group, to conduct the nuclear debate in terms of rational means-end calculations. Limited war was understood by the CND as a response to purely empirical questions which they thought it unethical to entertain.

CND institutionalised the debate in the Churches between gradualist and unilateralist approaches. Its formation

¹⁴⁹ Driver 1964, p.198.

brought home to the Churches the sense that abstract discussions of the rights and wrongs of violence vis-à-vis non-violence were rendered irrelevant by the nuclear age. The only issues of meaning were: (i) questions of the justified and unjustified level of force; and (ii) questions that asked in whose interests such power was exercised. CND felt that no gain from the use of nuclear weapons could possibly justify the annihilation it would bring in a *just* war sense. In other words, CND's formation was based on the presupposition that the traditional Christian debate between pacifism and *just* war was redundant in the nuclear age. A proposition the Study Group felt unable to accept. CND, however, aimed to motivate believers into action with the knowledge that real progress could come through struggling against accepted thinking. Such an attempt to understand and re-model the world allowed a comparison with the early Church before Augustine: they were pacific-ist rather than outright pacifist.

The Study Group, however, could not accept that a gradualist approach was largely irrelevant even if nuclear pacifists felt that war could no longer be just in a nuclear age. Bell and MacIntyre's resignation from the Study Group symbolised this new battle line.

The clearest statement of the Council's attitude to nuclear affairs was their 1959 Report *Christians and Atomic War*. Like the Oldham Report, the 1959 Report subscribed to a confrontational view of international relations. It

envisaged not so much the gradual containment of nuclear war, but rather its final and catastrophic extension. The underlying assumption appeared to be that the *status quo* was worth defending even if the cost to human life was the death of millions. The BCC's intention was to construct a modern theoretical framework in which the use of nuclear weapons was subject to ethical calculation. Their starting point was the collective body of norms known as *just war*. This study was completed against a background of: first, the emergence of an organised anti-nuclear movement; second, growing public concern over nuclear testing; and finally, the continued polarisation of opinion, both inside and outside the Churches, regarding the viability of the *just war* in the nuclear age. Despite these events the Council line had not changed significantly from the conclusion first drawn by the Oldham Commission thirteen years previously: the Bomb was to be lived with. By urging Christians to "learn to live with the Bomb" the BCC counselled, as MacKinnon puts it, "not an effort at radical understanding, aimed at eliminating the appalling distortion of human achievement, seemingly built into the fabric of our world, but an acceptance of what it was alleged could not be changed."¹⁵⁰

The Report shows that in the late 1950s the BCC was agitated most with the fact that the West was intending, if war came, to use nuclear weapons first. The Study Group

¹⁵⁰ MacKinnon 1968b, p.25.

believed that Britain could escape from this moral predicament known as massive retaliation by transferring its nuclear armoury from national to international control. In this way the concept of deterrence could be underwritten by international law. The CND view that the supreme ethical requirement was to prevent massive retaliation by abolishing nuclear weapons in the first place did not carry weight. Rather, the Report relied on accepted methods of diplomacy and argued that the ultimate aim of all states should be to abolish nuclear weapons through multilateral effort. This goal could be achieved by establishing international control of nuclear materials. So long as the State came out in favour of the ultimate aim of abolition and the intermediate aim of collective control, the BCC believed Britain should retain nuclear weapons as a contribution to Western deterrence. Nuclear weapons were seen as a symptom and cause of political tensions, the need for control on an international basis was therefore acknowledged. Yet the BCC primarily saw this control as coming from the cessation of nuclear weapon testing. Whilst the BCC were prepared to learn to live with nuclear weapons, they also favoured every effort to bring them under international control. The Report was comprehensively incremental, conservative, and gradualist.

The pamphlet *Christians and Atomic War* was offered as a contribution to Christian thinking on defence and disarmament in the nuclear age. It was designed in order to: first,

encourage responsible reflection and political action by Christian individuals; and second, as the necessary basis for responsible statements by Church groups local and national. Yet for all its talk of participation the Report demanded very little action. All that was required was a fundamental support for the State and its right to orchestrate decision-making process. It blended a liberal optimism with realist 'common-sense'. Christian responsibility was to be kept alive by calling for restraint in face of the harshness of *Realpolitik* as personified by the massive retaliation policy. This bleak view on the possibility for change and transformation, though it called for moderation in the conduct of international affairs and acknowledged the Christian ideal of love, provided justification for a British nuclear arsenal. *Christians and Atomic War* was the first British ecumenical report to attempt to move the debate in Christian ethics away from 'middle axioms' to a consideration of the means with which a Christian policy should be formulated.

CHAPTER NINE:

CONCLUSION

Chapter One introduced this thesis as an empirical study of The British Council of Churches' attitudes regarding defence and disarmament in the Cold War years 1945-59. Its specific intention has been to understand why the BCC responded to the controversial policy of massive retaliation by promoting an alternative nuclear strategy known as limited war. This *just war* theory was seen by the BCC as the appropriate Christian response to an unethical defence policy despite the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament's demand for the immediate unilateral and non-contingent renunciation of British nuclear weapons. The study's main contribution has been to lay bare the discussions and policy options that led The British Council of Churches to endorse the idea that a war fought with nuclear weapons could still be 'just'. This end has been achieved by: first, suggesting how Christians in the BCC understood the role of the British State and their own responsibility as citizens; and second, illustrating how such evaluations affected a Christian policy-making process that aimed to influence Western defence attitudes. For these reasons the work is offered as an original contribution to

substantive research in an area largely ignored by the literature on politics and international studies.

Section I, Chapter Two, theoretically located *just war* ideas. Here it was shown that, although there are competing Christian traditions, it was St. Augustine who fashioned *just war* in order to determine the circumstances in which war could, or should, be waged by Christians. His distinctive approach to questions of authority, legitimacy, and responsibility effected the Church's first significant accommodation with the presuppositions of political realism. Augustine moved the Church away from the anti-militarism, quasi-pacifism, and idealism of many of its early Fathers (e.g. Tertullian, Origen, Lactantius). The *just war* approach thus begins with the conviction that existing societal arrangements are (albeit relatively) justified and worth saving through violence.

Section II, Chapter Three introduced the ecumenical movement as a product of an optimistic world view that aimed to further a spiritual and material reformation -- to bring 'God back' into social life -- as a counter to post-Enlightenment interpretations of secularised historical progress. After World War Two the BCC became the principal (the only truly interdenominational) non-Catholic body dealing with political issues for the British Christian community.

Chapter Four argued that the extent to which political crisis had shifted ecumenicalism's essential optimism into pessimism was particularly apparent in the Oldham Commission's exploration, and comment on, the atom bomb. *The Era of Atomic Power* was strongly anti-pacifist and endorsed the idea that Britain should retain the Bomb both to protect her 'Great Power' status, and as a legitimate *just war* deterrent. The Report's understanding of the appropriate Christian response to the atomic dilemma was based on a Augustinian-style *via media* between moral and political responsibility. Because the British State was a just, trust-worthy, and legitimate authority it was also an acceptable holder of the nuclear means. The Report was representative of the 'middle axioms' approach -- one that paid attention to the ends rather than the means of policy. To the Commission there was no novel ethico-political implication in atomic power.

Chapter Five showed that the development and deployment of thermonuclear weapons in the years 1950-57 raised new ethical questions for Christians. The rationale for keeping or renouncing nuclear weapons was no longer the same as when a Western monopoly existed before 1949. The attitudes of the BCC and its member Churches towards the development of thermonuclear devices were, however, as divided as their attitudes to atomic weapons. The BCC stance affirmed the notion of a British thermonuclear deterrent. The development of the H-bomb had, nonetheless, intensified *just war* debate.

Although differences of opinion between Christian pacifists and *just war* advocates were continuing to dominate the terms in which the debate over war was articulated within the Churches, thermonuclear developments put increasing strain on the *just war* demand for conflict to be determined by 'legitimate' authority. For many post-war Christians involved in the campaign against nuclear weapons, individual activism (i.e. outside their constituent Churches) became a vital part of a wider political agenda. To move against nuclear weaponry was to move against the type of elitist and unrepresentative war-culture that produced such technology without democratic consultation. A coherent Christian anti-nuclear perspective began to show signs of winning greater support if it could successfully engage dialogue on two main levels: first, by communicating the idea that the nuclear age demanded new Christian thinking about the citizen's democratic responsibilities; and second, by claiming that the *just war* synthesis between force, political expediency, and morality was rendered obsolete in the nuclear era.

Section III, Chapter Six, developed the proposition that the controversy surrounding the failure to secure a H-bomb test ban, rather than the immorality of massive retaliation as such, brought the BCC to a considered attention of strategic policy. The BCC view since 1946 had given primary attention to the need to maintain deterrence, and the need to halt or reverse nuclear proliferation. This was for two reasons. On

one hand, the Council's Officers were keenly aware that many Christians felt that nuclear weapons, and in particular thermonuclear weapons, were abhorrent and immoral. This sense was exacerbated when considered from the perspective of Britain's nuclear strategy as outlined in Duncan Sandys' 1957 White Paper *Defence: Outline of Future Policy*. Yet on the other hand, the Council's Officers felt unable to disavow nuclear devices and condone nuclear abstention. This brought into question the manner with which the BCC approached the nuclear dilemma.

The International Department in particular, was increasingly relied upon to speak on behalf of the Churches. To this extent its Officers recognised their potential radically to affect, not only the terms with which the nuclear debate was conducted, but perhaps also the attitudes of the individual Churches for whom they spoke. It would be difficult to underestimate the Department's power on these terms. Yet the impression is that the International Department had begun as an amalgamation of several interests, like the Council as a whole, and had become more ecclesiological and cautious with the passage of time. The Council's Officers concluded that a constructive nuclear policy offered the most politically sensitive, yet ethical alternative, to an unpalatable situation. For these reasons Rear Admiral Sir Anthony Buzzard was invited to present his limited war thesis to the Council meeting of October 1957.

Buzzard introduced to the BCC the novel idea that nuclear weapons on their own would not deter but that they could, nonetheless, be part of a viable *just war* approach. He advocated both the retention of nuclear weapons and a more credible strategy for their use should deterrence fail. Whilst Buzzard avowed that a nuclear capability did not necessarily mean nuclear weapons would be used if deterrence failed this, of course, was a matter of political judgement. To counter his proposition with the argument that there was no adequate defence was to miss his point. Buzzard's realism was not separated from the advocating of massive retaliation through moral evaluation alone but by, and more fundamentally, an understanding of the nature of war itself. To Buzzard acts of thermonuclear ('strategic') violence simply surpassed the boundaries of war as 'rational' activity. Buzzard's *de facto* claim that a war waged with 'tactical' (i.e. non-thermonuclear) devices could be rational thus began with his assumption that the State did not necessarily need to limit itself to trying to avoid nuclear confrontation. His conviction about the need to limit strategic nuclear devices was a function of his belief that, given the nature of international affairs, war was unavoidable. For Buzzard disarmament and defence were part of the same paradigm because if peace was desired a State must prepare for war. Buzzard's speech made a dramatic impact on BCC attitudes. Its main

corollary was that a Study Group on the Moral Aspects of Disarmament was formed.

In Chapter Seven it was suggested that the likely ramifications of including a strategist (i.e. Admiral Buzzard) in the BCC Study Group was under appreciated by its Chair, Robert Mackie. Whilst Mackie desired an even-handed or "ideologically balanced" approach the Study Group was dominated by representatives of the realist "if you want peace, prepare for war" perspective. At this point it was argued that the nature of the eventual BCC contribution should come as little surprise once the powerfully articulated ideological preferences of those selected to serve in the Group were considered. The fact that the Study Group was generally unsympathetic to "if you want peace, prepare for peace" idealism, led to the notion that a realist approach was inevitable. This is notwithstanding the sense that Mackie and Group Secretary Keighley (who became converted to Buzzard's position) were not driven to support Buzzard at first. Rather it was their 'neutrality', and not just Buzzard's coherence, that allowed the retention of a gradualist, multilateralist, and just war approach to the nuclear debate. Bringing Bishop Bell and Alasdair MacIntyre into the Group to represent 'peace activism' created no serious challenge to the Buzzardist line.

The inclusion of Bell and MacIntyre into the Study Group produced an initial lack of agreement on whether a specifically Christian contribution could be made to the

problem of defence and disarmament. The common denominator in the Study Group's thinking was an agreement in favour of the broad desirability of 'peace' -- anything that reduced Cold War tension and made war less likely. Any agreement beyond this was proving difficult. Here Alan Booth appeared as a vitally important contributor to the Group's thinking, second in importance only to Buzzard. It was Booth who became largely responsible for the clarification of policy and process in the Group.

Booth was particularly representative of Augustinian-style realism. He felt the Group's task was to restore professional credibility to the Church. Booth was responsible for the idea that there had hitherto been a frequent failure on the part of Christians to sit down before the facts and consider them realistically. It was his contribution that led the Study Group to concentrate on the idea that nuclear weapons could be controlled once a realist understanding of the nature of international affairs was conceded to.

Chapter Eight began by arguing that the formation of the CND in 1958 did not create a new situation for the British Churches but rather intensified and polarised existing divisions. To the British political and religious Establishments CND's birth became a pertinent symbol of growing rebellion against existing structures of authority and accepted ways of policy-making. It proved to be an agency for a progressive but informal 'ecumenicalism' (i.e. a forum for

uniting Christians) which formal ecumenicalism had failed to do. This was because nuclear weapons proved to be a more focused standard of judgement with which to foster unity. CND's principal of criticism was more focused, less abstract, and had specific goals to secure. In this sense its programme constituted an idealist (people-centred) alternative to realist state-centricity. Unilateralists were both morally and ideologically opposed to Buzzard's limited war thinking. To Campaigners, the Group's approach was not appreciably different to the massive retaliation doctrine. For them the defence of gradualism only resulted in the loss of real pressure for disarmament. The moral judgement of the CND thus began from a different position to that of the BCC. CND rallied against the very tendency, exemplified by the Study Group, to conduct the nuclear debate in terms of rational means-end calculations. Limited war was understood as a response to questions which the CND thought it unethical to entertain.

CND institutionalised the debate in the Churches between gradualist and unilateralist, contingent and non-contingent approaches to disarmament. Its formation brought home the sense that abstract discussions of the rights and wrongs of violence *vis-à-vis* non-violence were rendered irrelevant in the nuclear age. The issues of meaning were: (i) questions of the justified and unjustified level of force; and (ii) questions that asked in whose interests such power was

exercised. CND aimed to motivate believers into action with the knowledge that real progress could come through struggling against accepted thinking. Such an attempt to re-model the world allowed a comparison with the early Church before Augustine: CND were pacific-ist rather outright pacifist. Campaigners' felt that no gain from the use of nuclear weapons could possibly justify the annihilation it would bring in a *just war* sense. CND's formation was thus based on the presupposition that the traditional debate between pacifism and *just war* was redundant. The Study Group felt unable to accept such a proposition. Bell and MacIntyre's resignation from the Study Group symbolised this new battle line.

The Study Group could not accept that a gradualist approach was irrelevant or that war could no longer be just. The clearest statement of such thinking was the 1959 Report *Christians and Atomic War*. Like the Oldham Commission, the 1959 study subscribed to a confrontational view of international relations. It envisaged not so much the gradual containment of nuclear war, but rather its final and catastrophic extension. The underlying assumption appeared to be that the *status quo* was worth defending even if the cost in human life was intense. The BCC's intention was to construct a modern theoretical framework in which the use of nuclear weapons was subject to ethical calculation. Their starting point, inevitably, was the collective body of norms known as *just war*. This study was completed against a background of:

first, the emergence of an organised anti-nuclear movement; second, growing public concern over nuclear testing; and finally, the continued polarisation of opinion, both inside and outside the Churches, regarding the viability of the *just war* in the nuclear age. Yet the Council line had not changed significantly from the conclusion first drawn by *The Era of Atomic Power* thirteen years previously: the Bomb was to be lived with.

The Report shows that in the late 1950s the BCC was agitated most with the fact that the West was intending, if war came, to use nuclear weapons first. The Study Group believed that Britain could escape from this moral predicament known as massive retaliation by transferring its nuclear armoury from national to international control. In this way the concept of deterrence could be underwritten by international law. The CND view that the supreme ethical requirement was to prevent massive retaliation by the non-contingent abolition of nuclear weapons did not carry weight. Rather, the Report relied on accepted methods of diplomacy and argued that the ultimate aim of all States should be to abolish nuclear weapons through multilateral effort. The Report was incremental, gradualist, and 'realistic'. By rejecting calls for British unilateralism the BCC confirmed Christian support for gradualist multilateralism and endorsed *just war* theory for the nuclear age.

The pamphlet *Christians and Atomic War* was offered as a contribution to Christian thinking. It was designed in order to: first, encourage responsible reflection and political action by Christian individuals; and second, as the necessary basis for responsible statements by Church groups local and national. Yet for all its talk of participation the Report demanded very little action. All that was required was the fundamental support for the State and its right to orchestrate decision-making process. Christian responsibility was to be kept alive by calling for restraint in face of the harshness of *Realpolitik* personified by the policy of massive retaliation. This bleak view on the possibility for change and transformation, though it called for moderation in the conduct of international affairs and acknowledged the Christian ideal of love, provided justification for acts of nuclear violence. *Christians and Atomic War* was the first British ecumenical report to move the debate in Christian ethics away from 'middle axioms' to a consideration of the means with which a Christian policy should be formulated.

In drawing these elements together into final analyses it is necessary to refer to the hypotheses introduced in Chapter One. It was claimed that this research has been based on two hypotheses: the first of these was that, from the perspective of IR, the BCC's approach can be understood as a form of 'Augustinian' realism. This is to argue that the Churches maintained a confrontational view of international relations

by subscribing to a particular conception of the State, national interest, and Christian political responsibility. The second hypothesis was that the BCC's *just war* was thus more representative of the realist rather than idealist theoretical frameworks. This suggested two possible conclusions. On one hand, the idea that the significance of the BCC approach lay not in its challenge to Government policy but in its role in helping to marginalise the radical idealism represented by the CND position. On the other hand, the notion that discussions of *just war* cannot be separated from qualitative judgements about the State. These conclusions are reached by three points.

First, the *just war* was seen by the Study Group's that produced the Reports as the most accurate theoretical expression of their approach to the essence of politics among States. In 1959 the BCC applied the insights of this strategy in order to oppose, in specific terms, the massive retaliation formulation. This limited war policy, however, did not advocate a change in foreign policy practice, but rather a change in defence norms: i.e. the BCC were concerned not so much with the dangers of nuclear weapons but in advocating a 'realistic' policy in which the use of nuclear devices could be seen as a rational defence option. The concept was intimately linked to the notion that an unacceptable degree of freedom would result in a Soviet invasion of the West. Whilst the concept of survival lay at the heart of the BCC's policy

recommendations, the concept was understood not in universal terms (i.e. the survival of humanity) but as the specific survival of the Western State. Survival, in other words, was a normative judgement on the State, liberal democratic values, and the adversarial view of the Cold War struggle between the West and the Soviet Union. The chief beneficiary of such formulation was the nuclear *status quo*.

Second, by urging a Augustinian ethic of responsibility the BCC provided a realist set of answers to what they saw as the recurrent and ultimately insoluble moral dilemmas of statecraft. In the calculation of policy the pragmatism of deterrence prevailed. The BCC formulation presupposed a system composed of States, acting as unitary actors, who needed to maximise their power *vis-à-vis* other States. The Soviet Union, as the main State with substantial military capabilities opposed to Western values, was assumed to be expansionist. In this way the need to make national interest the exclusive goal of foreign policy was a realist judgement. The just war was intended to provide an appropriate basis for retrospective censure and punishment if the Soviet Union violated the terms on which the established *status quo* was built. Hence the BCC formulation of the necessity for a Western 'balance' in the international system.

Finally, the BCC's approach was not radical. Limited war acted as an "opium of the people" directing the public away from CND struggle against the State. The BCC served as a

counter-revolutionary force whose response to the nuclear dilemma appears as a matter of expediency. Just as Augustine rejected the idea that human agency was the means with which to create a better world, the BCC rejected the possibility that nuclear disarmament could be a possible option for Britain. Even a revolutionary act of unilateral disarmament could not break the continuous cycle of force, power, and war that Augustinians saw as inevitable. To this end pacifism in both its absolute and nuclear forms was rejected, and multilateral not unilateral disarmament advocated.

To conclude, in the years 1945-59 the BCC showed over-respect for the *just war* tradition. By understanding its criteria in positivistic fashion the BCC substituted novel theorising for established narrative. Rather than the *just war* being understood in terms of a moral expression of how States *ought* to act, its significance lay in the way it was used to recast moral evaluations of the viability of the Western State in the guise of national interest. This emphasises that discussions of *just war* cannot be separated from qualitative judgements about the character of the State. Christian attitudes to war are grounded in ethical and theological assumptions concerning legitimate authority, the right of the State to determine policy, and Christian political responsibility both individual and collective. To fully appreciate the significance, and the limitations, of the tradition *just war* must be placed in this wider setting.

APPENDIX:

THE RESEARCH PROCESS¹

This study has been rewarding, thought-provoking and, at times, frustrating experience. In its finished form this thesis has addressed a political problem. It reveals how the discussions and policy options formulated by the British Council of Churches gave Christian support to the ethics of nuclear deterrence in a specific historical period. Although this is easily stated, the main problem I faced with this research was the articulation of a viable topic. This was no mean task and remained the most difficult part of the entire project.

The initial formulation of a viable project struck me as a bad joke the point was appreciated or not, and enfeebled when explained. My MA in International Studies (1992-93) did not prepare me for how challenging this exercise would be or suggest how projects, questions or hypotheses are generated.

The initial problem was to translate a broad interest in politics and Christianity into a working hypothesis. I wanted to research an area in which the Church's

¹ This appendix appears in modified form as "Investigating Methodologies: A Comparison of the MA and PhD Research Processes" in P. Burnham's (ed.) *Surviving the Research Process in Politics*. See Gorry 1997.

responsibility for both public life, and the renewal of political struggle, could be highlighted and stressed. I was sympathetic to the view that a critical commitment to Christianity could lead to a willingness to question the political and moral assumptions of capitalist democracy, and followed Alasdair MacIntyre's assertion that shared beliefs and values were necessary to bind a society together and generate a sense of meaning, purpose and above all hope.² A theoretical approach, like my Masters dissertation³, was favoured in which knowledge on the Church-State relationship could be expanded by examining Christian philosophy as a moral alternative to the authority of the Western State. Thus I had firm ideas regarding the debate to contribute to yet was not sure what questions to ask in order to develop a serious project. I had a research area but no clear topic.

For the first few months my time was spent in producing book reviews on Marx, neo-Marxist accounts on the role of Christianity, and evaluating radical theories of Church and State. Three factors soon suggested this would not be a viable research theme. First, Marx and his followers underestimated the cognitive importance of religion. Most criticism remained implied. Second, where opinions were explicated religion was normally seen as an instrument of class domination. Where space was generated for religious belief the general response was to revise historical

² MacIntyre 1985, p.263.

³ i.e. *Challenging Positivism: Gramsci, Civil Society and International Political Economy* (University of Warwick, 1993).

materialism in functional terms so that it was reduced to a 'superstructural' element (Gramsci) reflective of the economic 'base', or it gave religion a neutral 'relatively autonomous level' (scientific Althusserianism). Finally, I had plenty of ideas that involved the Church-State relationship yet could not think of an appropriate question to ask that would lead me deep into the research process. I had no particular angle with which to focus my energies.

With the benefit of hindsight one of the problems I faced was that because I was genuinely interested in all aspects of the subject, I could not bring myself to focus on one particular area. After two months I was still without a viable topic and began to think I was too 'stupid' to do 'proper' research. I simply couldn't grasp what was required of me. I was thinking, reading and writing (in that order⁴) but every attempt I made at solving the puzzle that would suddenly reveal a do-able proposition was frustrated.

In my desperation I tried reading (and even buying) both research 'handbooks'⁵ and 'experience-based' accounts⁶ which I hoped would make sense of what was required of me. These accounts made me no wiser. It was only when I proceeded to read as many PhD's as I could manage that things finally began to become clearer. One thing that struck me was that

⁴ In hindsight my labour would have been made much easier if I had written more than I read, and read more than I thought.

⁵ e.g. Watson 1987.

⁶ e.g. Salmon 1992.

a number of the more interesting PhD's were based on archival analysis. As a consequence of this I put any idea of a purely theoretical PhD behind me.

It was not just reading PhD's that led me to a historical methodology. I realised that archival material could be used to develop both a comparative and analytical insight. A theoretically informed approach to the Church and politics could both describe and analyse past events in order to shed light on the contemporary situation. Archives also seemed appealing because it appeared to me that historians did not theorise enough when using them, and political scientists, in the main, were not using them at all. In short, archival analysis presented an opportunity.

The British Council of Churches Archives

The primary reason for choosing the archives of the BCC was that (unlike the Church of England⁷) no one had attempted to research them within the discipline.

The BCC archive is found in the Church of England Record Centre, Galleywall Road, Bermondsey, London. Because there is no automatic public access I required a letter of introduction from Rev. Dr. Colin Davey, the General Secretary of the Council of Churches. This happily proved to be a formality and the Church authorities were pleased to see records used for PhD purposes.

⁷ i.e. Virginia Austin's 1991 PhD "The Church of England as an International Actor in Southern Africa: 1970-80".

Once past the security door, the archivist furnished me with a copy of 'Transfer and Box Lists' relating to the political activities of the BCC. These indexes gave me some idea of the type of material I could expect to find but presented two immediate limitations: first, closure rules limited access; and second, material was inadequately indexed.

In the first instance a 30-year closure rule on administrative files (100-year closure on personal files!⁸) effectively forced the historical period I could research to before 1963. This served to discipline me into researching angles that would locate my study in the 1950s or early 1960s. The fact that material was not only inadequately indexed, but also incoherently catalogued⁹ caused more of a problem. Indexes only gave a vague idea as to the contents of particular files. For example, the index suggested records for the BCC's "International Department 1959: Miscellaneous" was located in 'Box 14'. Such limited information was frustrating and I had little choice but to recall plenty of files before gaining some sense of the nature of the archive.

Bearing in mind these limitations, and with the help of the transfer lists, I selected 1962 as a starting point and worked back chronologically hoping to appreciate the issues of political significance that had most exercised the

⁸ Archives normally operate with a 75 years closure.

⁹ A more systematic and coherent system is now in operation.

interests of the Churches. I found the material contained in files varied greatly but most included information on: resolutions and reports issued by the Council; correspondence with Government and other bodies particularly the WCC and the Federal Council of Churches; minutes of the regular meetings of the BCC's Assembly and its various departments (of particular interest to me was the International Department); reports from associated regional Church councils; letters and memoranda; reports written by Council officials returning from foreign visits; reports on the activities of visiting foreign dignitaries; newspaper cuttings; and transcripts of telephone conversations.

This initial perusal revealed two issues that dominated the Churches' attention in the five years 1957 to 1962: nuclear weapons, and decolonisation in Central Africa. I initially favoured researching the politics of the Churches in the formation and dissolution of the Central African Federation 1953 to 1963. On closer inspection however the nuclear debate proved to be a much more interesting proposition. This was partly because the nuclear debate is still with us, partly because it is both controversial and highly political, and partly because of the success of movements like the CND in galvanising opinion in the Churches. This subject could also give me the ground from which I could examine the activities of Councils and Assemblies of the present day.

Once the decision to research Church attitudes to the nuclear arms race was taken the research process became much easier. I selected a certain number of files to work with each day in order to become acquainted with my new topic. Interesting information would be entered straight into a laptop computer to be written up at leisure. Whilst much was learnt from studying the official Church publications found in the archives, more interesting information was revealed by looking at the way these publications were produced. Draft chapters and correspondence between the writers gave me a good sense of the tension between different attitudes held by Christians.

It is worth noting, however, that these archives like any other do not give a complete picture of events. Anyone who has looked carefully at declassified Government documents from the post-1945 era would recognise how inadequate the public record is as a guide to what was happening. Studying contemporary newspapers such as *The Times* henceforth became an invaluable ancillary research tool. Newspapers were particularly important because there is a serious lack of published information in book form in my specific area (i.e. BCC attitudes in the late 1950s).

One time-consuming aspect of the process was the fact that many of the names I came across were not familiar to me. This meant, if I was to make my research more relevant, I had to discover whether they were important figures -- perhaps known

for a particular scholarly approach. This involved the time-consuming activity of searching library data bases, biographical dictionaries, and secondary account bibliographies to try and locate the names, and if possible, locate them within a broader intellectual context. Quite naturally many names were not intellectually renowned, but I am sure it was a productive, if labour-intensive exercise.

After deciding to focus on a particular historical response to war I was now free to engage secondary material in a more theoretical manner. This involved understanding Church attitudes to war generally, and the long tradition of *just war* thinking particularly.

Theoretical Issues

From the start I was aware that I didn't need to justify that the BCC approach was or should be seen as the correct Christian approach. Rather, all I needed to show was how a particular constituency of believers, in a given historical period and condition, responded to the problem of war. In short, there was no need to equate the BCC approach as the 'authentically' Christian approach. This may seem obvious but it was important because I was sympathetic to Christianity generally, but unsympathetic to the particular notion of *just war*. It also seemed that a simple literature review of the *just war* would not help comprehend the diversity of Christian attitudes in the Cold War. Indeed, it could not theorise Christian CND opposition.

Two issues soon presented themselves: first, that it was necessary for me to gain a distinct conception of how and why the *just war* evolved and what needs and problems it set to address; and secondly, I needed to be sensitive to the historical context, both political and intellectual, in which the doctrine was articulated in the fourth century and why it was adopted by the BCC in the nuclear age.

The question arose, quite naturally, what was the Christian attitude to war before the *just war*, and what were the conditions in which it was presupposed that a codified approach to war was necessary? This, in turn, led to a host of other questions such as: What were the political implications behind the adoption of *just war*? What did the approach say about Christian attitudes to political authority, and the right of political authority to wage war on behalf of its citizens? Did Christendom's adoption of *just war* doctrine prevent it from comprehending the magnitude of the changes that nuclear weapons wrought in the waging of war -- did it prevent Christians seeing the nuclear crisis as it actually is?

I thus found myself confronted by a double task: to make clear to myself the evolution of the *just war* in its own restricted historical sense, and the intellectual and practical situation of its adoption by the British Churches in the nuclear age.

Inevitably this research has led me some way into previously uncharted fields: theology, the methodology and the

philosophy of the Graeco-Roman world, and the early Church's history in which Augustine's ideas were built. In the process the more I studied the *just war* doctrine the more I found that it presupposed certain attitudes to political authority. This led to the research conclusion that the contemporary adoption of the *just war* doctrine was based not on religious inclusion but, I argued, on a particular political ethic.

When I pursued this line of thought, moreover, I was confronted by a further question: What was the appropriate Christian response to both political authority and war in a nuclear age? Further, could such a conception, be grafted on to the old Church organisations at all and, if this were possible, what kind of Christian fellowship would deal with the unique nature of the nuclear dilemma?

These considerations became more obvious the more I appreciated the extent individual Christian's attitudes had been conditioned by a conflict between theology, doctrinal heritage, ecclesiastical organisation, and socio-political situation. This disunity or tension between private ethics and public policy was, I found, always evident. The important divide in Christian approaches to the nuclear debate was therefore not one between pacifism and *just war* but on one hand, between those who accepted the pragmatism of deterrence, with the implied adversarial relationship between the Soviet Union and the West; and on the other,

those who were persuaded that such a view could only lead to disaster in the long term.

This line of thinking led me to a particular conception of the *just war* tradition, its general relationship to Christian attitudes to war, and its conceptual location within IR. It again led to progress in my general ability to articulate the study's hypotheses. The results are summarised in the concluding chapter. It is important to note that these theoretical findings are genuine research results gained from the process of research, not theses which my PhD was written to support. It was necessary to supplement the actual text by illustrations in the form of extensive footnotes which I hope explain the issues from which my ideas are based upon.

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"BCC Commission on the Era of Atomic Power"	
Correspondence with Oldham	BCC/5/7/2i
Drafts of Chapters and Meetings of Commission	BCC/5/7/2ii
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